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No. 497.

{ COMPLETE. }

FRANK TOUSEY, PUBLISHER, 34 & 36 NORTH MOORE STREET, N. Y.
NEW YORK, July 3, 1882.

ISSUED EVERY WEDNESDAY.

{ PRICE
5 CENTS. }

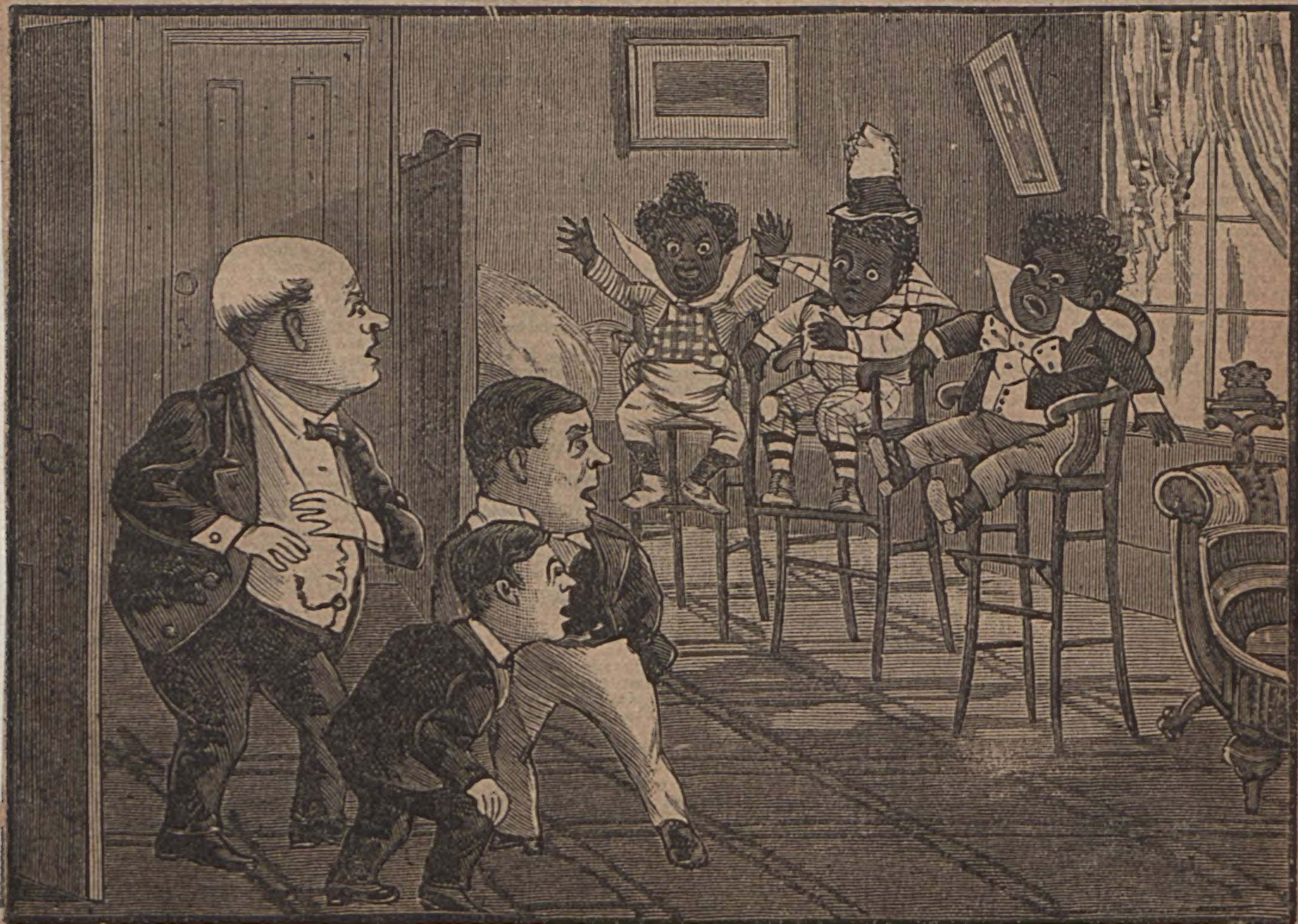
Vol. I

The Shortys Married and Settled Down.

A SEQUEL TO ALL THE SHORTY STORIES.

By PETER PAD.

Author of "Bob Rollick, the Yankee Notion Drummer," "Bob Rollick; or, What Was He Born For?" "Ebenezer Crow," "Stump; or, Little, but Oh, My!" "Chips and Chin-Chin," "Stuttering Sam," "Tommy Bounce," "Tom, Dick, and the —," "Shorty; or, Kicked into Good Luck," "Tommy Dodd," "Shorty in Search of His Dad," "Tumbling Tim," "The Shortys' Trip Around the World," etc., etc., etc., etc.



Tied into three high-chairs were the three babies, each one blackened up and dressed like a miniature negro minstrel. One of them was squalling like a young hurricane, another was gazing with wide open eyes, while the third was laughing and crowing delightedly.

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CHAPTER I.

WELL, fellows, here we are again!

I did think after bringing the Shortys back home from their trip around the world, that they would naturally simmer down and pass the remainder of their days in uneventful quiet, but I should have known them better.

I should have known that such a thing as quiet is impossible with them, although I feel convinced that the world at large might never have heard of them again had it not been for the original Shorty himself, a fellow who probably never will be quiet until he turns his toes up to the daisies.

On their return from the long journey they had taken, they all three of them—the old man Burwick, Shorty, and the Kid—rested in New York for about a month. The old man wanted to rest longer, in fact, he would have kept quiet the remainder of his life, but Shorty got restless and wanted to travel around some more.

He took several short trips alone, visiting Boston, Providence, Springfield, Hartford, New Haven, Albany, Buffalo, Niagara Falls, and other places, while grandfather and grandson remained quietly in New York, leaving it only occasionally for short trips to neighboring localities.

It is said that "oft threatened comes at last;" that "the pitcher that goes often to the well is broken at last;" that "every man meets his fate some day," and it finally proved so with Shorty.

The lad whom we have known so long; who had traveled tens of thousands of miles without meeting bodily harm, got caught out on the fly at last, although he kept mighty dark about it at first.

While spending a few days at Niagara Falls, he accidentally made the acquaintance of a widow lady by the name of Budge. She was a bright, smart, chipper, good-looking lady, but only about a head taller than Shorty was himself; but if her physical figure was not high enough, her financial figure was, for she was known to be quite wealthy and possessed of only two children—daughters—who were spending the season at the mountains.

Shorty became interested in her and she in him, and it was only a little while before they got as thick and sweet as molasses together. Indeed, it was the first time in his life that Shorty had ever been in love with a woman. He "had 'em bad," and for a time it took the devilry all out of him.

He was traveling under the name of George Burwick, which was really his right one, and was square on his good behavior. He was more of a swell and masher than we have ever known him before, and as it was possible for him to show a good bank account, it is not to be wondered at that the Widow Budge fell in love with him.

They parted after a week's acquaintance to meet again at Newport, and there they resolved on getting married, although on account of their size it was agreed to have a private wedding; after which they would start right off on their honeymoon tour, without letting any of their friends or relations know about it until some time afterward.

So they got a minister to hitch them up privately, and immediately started for the West, going by way of Niagara Falls, where they first met, and so greatly interested did they become in each other that they both forgot all about their friends and relations.

Indeed, Shorty had gone from New York to Newport without telling his father and son where he was going, or how long he intended to stay, which was something unusual for him.

Finally a month passed by without their hearing anything from him, and they began to grow anxious. They had both noticed that he had acted strangely after his return from the Falls, and now that they came to think of it in connection with his long and unexplained absence, it made both father and son very uneasy.

And here is just where I got let into it.

Taking up the *Herald* one morning about that time, I was astonished to see the following "Personal":

"GEORGE BURWICK ('Shorty')—Where are you? Communicate at once with your anxious father."

"JOSIAH BURWICK."

Was it possible that anything could have happened to my little old friend?

Without loss of time I went to Mr. Burwick's hotel, where I found both he and the Kid plunged in the greatest anxiety and grief.

"Mr. Pad, what on earth do you think has become of him?" asked the old man, anxiously.

"Oh, I think he will turn up all right," said I.

"Do you really think so, Petey?" asked the Kid; and I never saw him look so sober before.

"Yes; he has probably gone off yachting with some of his friends, and it may be impossible for him to communicate with you, or he may have written, and the letter miscarried."

"I am afraid not, Mr. Pad. I am afraid that something has happened him (hadn't there something happened him, though!) and that he has been murdered," said the old man.

"Oh, I cannot believe that, my dear sir."

"Now hold on, Petey, yer know dat dad allus carried a scoop of shug with him?"

"Well, yes; I know that he could generally sit down on a pretty fair-sized boodle."

"Dat's it, dat's what we're afraid of. May be some duffer found it out an' laid for him," said the little fellow, with great earnestness.

"I cannot believe it," I replied.

"And besides that, I have a fear that he may have made away with himself," said the old man.

"What!" I exclaimed; "Shorty make away with himself? (But hadn't he, though!) Shorty commit suicide? Shorty, the happiest, most genial soul in the world, he make a vulgar 'stiff' of himself? No, no. Take any shape but that, and my firm nerves shall never tremble. As well believe that Momus himself would get the blues."

"But stranger things than that have happened. When we saw him last, on his return from Niagara Falls, where he had been a couple of weeks, we both noticed that he looked and acted strangely. There was a sober, far-away look in his eyes, and he had but a little to say about anything."

"Is that so? Well, he may have fallen in love with somebody. That generally makes a man sober."

"Oh, nonsense! I cannot believe that possible any more than you believe it possible that he has committed suicide."

"Bah! Dad arn't that kind of a ruffie," said the Kid.

"Well, at all events, you will probably hear from him before long," said I.

"If I don't hear from him this week, I shall inform the police, and set them at work."

I left them with the best consolation I could give, and two days afterward I called again.

They had heard nothing from him, although several of his old friends who had seen the advertisement had called to inquire, and both father and son were plunged in the deepest sorrow.

But while we were speaking a telegraph messenger rapped on the door of their room. The Kid flew to open it, for he had become so nervous that he could not keep still.

"Josiah Burwick?" asked the messenger boy.

"Yes, that's me!" exclaimed the old man, leaping from his easy chair and running to the door.

Receiving the message, whatever it was, he trotted back again to the light.

Breaking the envelope with nervous hand he opened the dispatch and read aloud, as follows:

"CHICAGO, Ill., Wednesday.
"DEAR DAD—Just read yer ad. Forgot all 'bout yer. I'm here an' married. Will be home again next week. Yum, yum, yum!
SHORTY."

The old man dropped all in a heap upon the floor, and the Kid stood as though paralyzed.

I felt a trifle queer myself.

We sprinkled the old fellow with some ice water, and he gradually revived.

"Is that so?" were the first words he spoke after we had got him into his chair again.

"It looks like it," said I.

The Kid picked up the dispatch from the floor.

"Petey, ole man, read dat again; I haven't got der nerve," said he, with a voice trembling with emotion.

"Yes," said the old man faintly.

I read the dispatch to them again.

"I don't believe it," said the old man.

"It's a racket," put in the Kid.

"Yes, just like him."

"Der idea of dad's getting hooked up! Nixy!"

"But he is alive at all events," said I.

"Yes, thank heaven for that, he is alive!" the old man cried, most fervently.

"But dat's some of his taff. No hook up, oh, no; not unless he's got off his nut," protested the Kid.

"Oh, no; it is undoubtedly simply one of his old rackets. He thought he would create a sensation, that's all," added the old man.

"Well, I am glad to know that he is still in the land of the living, for whether he is really married or not does not so much matter; it's a trifle better than being dead," said I.

"Well, maybe, a trifle," mused the old man.

"At all events, I shall call up and see him when he returns."

"That's right, come of course."

"But don't expect ter find him hooked up, Petey; oh, no!" added the Kid, as I took my leave.

Of course at that time I knew no more about it than they did, but it somehow stuck in my mind that the little rascal was actually married.

I knew him to be a restless fellow, and that he had tried almost everything else in the world but matrimony in earnest, and I thought it would be just like him to try that now, that he had no other novelty to amuse himself with.

And I must confess that this belief grew upon me the more I thought about it, and I could hardly wait for next week to come that I might make sure of it, and I said to myself: "If he really has got married, the probability is that I shall have something more to write for THE BOYS OF NEW YORK regarding him."

I allowed a week to pass by before I called at the hotel again, and, being shown into the room, I found the old man sprawled in his easy-chair with a wet towel bound around his bald head, and the Kid in his little chair with his legs wide apart, his arms hanging listlessly at his side, and his whole appearance reminding me of a wilted onion-top.

They both looked languidly up, but neither spoke.

"Well?" said I, after waiting a moment without receiving either a welcome or a recognition.

They opened their eyes slowly.

"Has Shorty returned?"

They both groaned.

"What do you say? Has anything happened to him?"

Two more groans; one a bass, the other a treble.

"Pete, he's here," said the Kid, but in a tone that might have made a person think he had been brought home on ice or in a casket.

"Well, how is he?" and again the old man groaned.

"Petey, he's done it!"

"Done what?" I asked, though I strongly suspected.

"Hooked!"

"What! is he really married?"

"Oh, Mr. Pad, don't harrow us up," said the old man, sadly.

"No, I won't. My agricultural implements are all in the country. But tell me about it," said I.

"Petey, it's awful! Oh, that awful dad of mine!"

"Has he done bad?"

"Mr. Pad, I haven't got the nerve to tell you, but he is actually married; only think of it."

"Well, perhaps it will be a good thing for him; perhaps he will settle down and become a good, sober citizen," I suggested.

"Oh, don't, Mr. Pad!" moaned the old man.

"Where is he? I'd like to see him," I said, after watching their comical anguish for a while.

"They've gone on a wheel."
 "On a what?"
 "They have gone out for a ride, Mr. Pad, he and his—his—; yes, gone for a ride."
 "Say, Pete, he's fine sugar," said the Kid, with a little more animation in his voice.
 "Fine sugar!"
 "He's mashed on der ole girl; dead gone. Say, never saw anything like it. They don't do anything but give each other tail."
 "Well, that is only natural, seeing that they are just married and their honeymoon is at its full. What sort of a looker is she?"
 "She was a wid, Pete."
 "A widow?"
 "Got two kids?"
 "When? How old?"
 "Don't know," replied the old man. "We haven't had the courage to ask particulars yet."
 "How old do you think she is?"
 "Forty, I should say. Passably good-looking, but a full head taller than he is."
 "An' he says she's got a big shug-box."
 "Got money, eh? Well, that's nice, I guess. Shorty is too level-headed to make a fool of himself."
 "But he's married!" protested the father.
 "And got two kids," chirruped the son.
 "Well, that's all right, if she has a plenty of money besides," said I.
 "No, no, Mr. Pad, you don't offer us any sympathy at all. Don't you see that he has broken up the family? What will become of us now?"
 "Well, yes, I dare say you will miss him."
 "Miss him! I'd rather buried him."
 "Oh, don't say that, Mr. Burwick."
 "Mr. Pad, you're not a father," and the old man pulled the wet towel down over his face and blubbered like a boy.
 "Pete, it's tough. But I put up my hands," said the Kid, holding up his hands and shaking his head.
 "What do you mean, Chawles?"
 "I shake him," and getting up, he strode savagely to the window and looked out.
 "Well, here was a family breaking up indeed! I waited a moment, trying to think of something to say, when I heard a cheery voice outside, and the next instant Shorty bounded into the room.
 He stopped a second on seeing me, and then approached with extended hands, gloved to the queen's taste.
 "Hello, Peter! bust my kids!" he exclaimed, placing his hands in mine.
 "Better bust yer snoot!" I heard the Kid growl, without turning around. Indeed, the old man did not remove the towel from his face.
 "Shorty, I am glad to see you," said I, as I vigorously shook his stout little hands.
 "Oh, call me George, Peter, call me George Burwick, please," said he, with a comic emphasis and manner that were irresistible.
 "Ah, I couldn't think of ever calling you anything but Shorty, unless it should be in the presence of your wife. I'm confounded glad to see you."
 "I've got it dat way, too, Pete."
 "And so you have—"
 "Skipped an' done it. I suppose these duffs have told yer all about it."
 "Yes, and they appear to feel very bad about it."
 "Oh, they go fight with themselves! Why, them roosters think a chap don't want to do nothing but dance around wid them. Don't mind 'em, Pete, they'll get over it after awhile. Come in, I want ter introduce yer ter der queen bee; come along, but be sure an' call me *Jawage*," said he, catching hold of my hand and laughing in his old way.
 I glanced at the old man and the Kid, but they had not moved, and without saying a word to them, I followed my little old friend.
 Arriving at a parlor door, he opened it, and I was shown into a magnificently-furnished room, and presently out tripped a bright, plump, smiling little lady, still dressed for a drive, but she stopped on seeing a stranger, and I had a chance to observe that she was rather good-looking, withal.
 "Kate, my old life-long friend, Peter Pad; Mr. Pad, Mrs. Burwick," said he, introducing us.
 She advanced and extended her hand most graciously. "Any life-long friend of my husband's is always most welcome," said she.
 I thanked and congratulated her. She was a charming little body, with a voice as sweet as her smile, and I wasn't a bit surprised that Shorty had fallen in love with her.
 Shorty had concealed nothing from her, only the fact that his career had been written and published by me, although he had often told her of me as one of his particular friends, she informed me, and so I gave nothing away.
 We conversed for nearly an hour, during which time a waiter had dispensed a bottle of champagne to moisten our throats, and I left fully in the belief that Shorty had made still another hit in getting such a charming wife, and when he followed me out I gave him my hand with earnest congratulations.
 "How is she for high, Pete?"
 "Elegant."
 "She's eighteen carat fine."
 "I think she is, and I congratulate you both. But how about the old man and Kid?"
 "Big boobies! But they'll take a roll off presently, after they've spent their pout and growl, never fear. But come an' see me often, Pete. You're always welcome, you know."
 I promised him that I would, and left the hotel without calling again on the old man and the Kid, concluding that Shorty was right, and that their grief would soon wear itself out.
 Now you understand all about it, boys, and just how I happened in at the start of this new racket, and which

in a short time proved to be by far the most comical and interesting set of episodes that I have ever yet written of this remarkable family of Shortys.
 The fun and complications grew fast and furious from the hour of Shorty's marriage, but in order that you may both understand and enjoy it, I have commenced at this point, and shall give it to you just as it happened thereafter.
 The old man and the Kid did not recover from their sulks and lamentations for several days. The Kid recovered first, however, for Shorty's wife took a great fancy to the little runt, whose stepmother she was, and brought all her woman's ingenuity to bear upon him, until finally he began to think that she was just old peaches, and so he gradually became reconciled to the change that the marriage had produced.
 Not quite so soon with the old man Burwick, however. He recovered slowly, and was not so susceptible to the blandishments of his daughter-in-law as the Kid was.
 But in the course of a week or ten days after Shorty's return from Chicago, the two daughters of his wife, who had been apprised of the marriage, came to pay them a visit.
 Whew! This astonished everybody but the mother and daughters, for they were both of them full-fledged women, although they were very short, like the mother.
 One of them, Angelina, was seventeen, and the other, Caroline, was about fifteen, and they were well-formed, good-looking girls, with the single exception of their height.
 Shorty was delighted with his stepdaughters, and in a very short time they came to like him, just as everybody did who came in contact with him.
 He took them to places of amusement, and made it just as nice as possible for them; and even the Kid became greatly taken with his stepsisters, especially the youngest one.
 But when the old man saw this, his disgust became greater than ever to think that Shorty had married a woman with daughters old enough to be mothers themselves. And so, when they wanted him to make up a party to go riding or to a theater, he always had some excuse for not going, and remain in his room to growl and drink brandy, his only consolation now.
 "I know it will kill me," he would muse, when alone by himself. "I know it will bring my gray hairs down with sorrow to the grave;" and then he stroked his bald head without ever thinking where the gray hairs were to come from. "And now the Kid forsakes me in my sorrow; my grandson—the last child I had—he forsakes his poor old father and goes off frolicking with the women folks, the little fool. Maybe he will get crazy the same as his father did, and get tied up to a woman. Good Heavens! if that should happen I know I should die. I'll warn him in time, and show him what a fool his father has made of himself, and save him from such a fate if possible."
 But in spite of his dislike of the whole thing, Shorty's wife and daughters liked him, as they did the other two. Indeed, they considered them the funniest family of little men they had ever seen. Shorty astonished them with his performance on the banjo (he never forgot or forsook that), as he had so many thousands of others, and the very power of music bound the whole family closer together.
 At the same time it must be borne in mind that the Budge family were no slouches. All three of them were good singers and musicians, and what pleased both Shorty and the Kid more than anything else was the fact of their having a comic vein in their natures, and being always ready for a lark or a practical joke.
 A jollier family cannot be conceived of than this one was, for there was something funny going on all the time. In fact, the three females were as much like the three Shortys as it could be possible to match the whole world over.
 And it was this joyous, jovial disposition on the part of them all that did more than anything else to choke the old man out of his blues.
 And yet he was not exactly pleased with things, and took every opportunity to warn the Kid against losing the level of his head.
 "Seems to me you are very thick with that girl, Caroline, lately," he growled to him one day.
 "Thick! why, I see right in der fam. She's my step-sis, she is," replied the Kid.
 "Well, just be careful and see that the relationship doesn't go a stepfather," replied the old man.
 "What?" and the little fellow struck an attitude of astonishment.
 "Be careful that she does not wheedle you as her mother did your father."
 "What! marry my step-sis? Pop, yer goin' clear off yer cabase."
 "Well, I think it is my duty to warn you, for I have not failed to notice that she thinks a great deal of you."
 "'Course, why shouldn't she like her step-bub? She's a bully gal, is Caddy."
 "Yes, well enough at arm's length."
 "Yum—yum—yum!"
 "I really hope you will be sensible, Charley."
 "Oh, give us a rest! Yer've got der wust case of growl I ever see," replied the little fellow, leaving the room to seek his step-sisters.
 Now the old man had better have kept quiet, for what he said only set the Kid to thinking in a way he might never have tumbled into but for him.
 The grandfather had dropped some yeast into the dough, and at once the cake began to rise.

CHAPTER II.

ONLY a few days after the conversation that had taken place between the Kid and the old man in re-

lation to matrimony, the Kid and Caroline Budge were missing.
 Their first day's absence did not create much alarm, for they were often away together on excursions, but when they failed to return at night all hands became decidedly anxious. And yet some accident might have happened to keep them away, and so they hoped for the best.
 What that accident was is explained in the following telegram, received the next day:
 "Delevan House, Albany, Thursday.
 "Dear Dad: 'Caddy' and I were hitched up in a matrimonial team yesterday. Yum, yum, yum! Be home in a few days.
 THE KID."
 Talk about electric shocks! Here was a whole thunderbolt.
 Shorty and his wife were paralyzed at the audacity of the thing, and the old man was put to bed, sick, and a doctor sent for.
 "Well, dat carols ther bun!" mused Shorty, after the first excitement was over.
 "And only see what a complication it makes," said his wife. "Not that I care particularly, for I think Charley just splendid, but only think of the relational complication."
 "And think of dad."
 "Yes, poor dear old fellow. Your getting married nearly broke his heart."
 "An' this 'll make hash of it, I'm afraid," said Shorty, seriously.
 "I should like to comfort him, but I lack the nerve to go to his room. How is he now?"
 "Can't get a word out of him; but ther doc. has given him something ter quiet his nerves, and I guess he'll come out all right."
 "And, George, do you suppose he has thought of those complications? I hope not," she added.
 "How do you figure 'em out, honey?"
 "Why, just look at it; you are Charley's father and his father-in-law. You are also father-in-law to 'Caddy,' your step-daughter, while I become the mother-in-law of my own daughter, also the mother-in-law of my step-son, and—"
 "Hold on! When! Oh, give us a rest, Kate; it makes my head swim," cried Shorty.
 "But that isn't all of it."
 "That's enough, honey. Don't say a word about it to anybody, and perhaps they won't find it out. Father-in-law to my own kid!" and he shook his head sadly as he fell back into a chair.
 "Oh, if 'Cady' had ever hinted to me anything about it I could have told her how it would be, but it is too late now," she added, with a sigh.
 "Oh! oh! oh! it's a terrible thing to be a father."
 "Alas! no worse than to be a mother."
 At that moment Angelina Budge, her oldest and only single daughter, now entered the room.
 "I guess you had better go in and see him, pop; for he seems out of his head," said she.
 "What! ther old man off his nut?" exclaimed Shorty, leaping to his feet.
 "He is talking somewhat wildly."
 With a stolid stride Shorty went to the old man's rooms, and to tell the truth, he was not feeling very well himself. What a fool that little rascal had made of himself in following his example.
 He found the old man in bed and all broken up, groaning and sighing over the last straw that had broken the camel's back. He looked up as Shorty approached.
 "Well, dad, how der yer segaciate?"
 "Oh, Shorty, I think this blow will kill me," he moaned.
 "Nonsense! What's der matter wid yer? Brace up and show yer gait."
 "Oh, my boy, this is dreadful."
 "Dreadful funny; dat's all I catch on ter."
 "Funny!" and the old fellow groaned again.
 "Let der Kid hook up if he wants ter; it will make a man of him. He's no chicken, an' it's likely he wants a hen as much as anybody."
 "But I'm certain that it will kill me."
 "Bet yer a hundred ter one it don't!" exclaimed Shorty, pulling out a roll of bills.
 "Oh, Shorty, how can you be so frivolous?"
 "Narry friv. Here's my shug."
 "But you must know that I would not bet in such a case."
 "Dat's cos yer haven't got der nerve. Bah! 'fore I'd be a baby. Brace up an' show yer style."
 "Shorty, I don't want you to talk to me if this is the way you sympathize with my sorrow."
 "Bah! I thought my dad was game."
 "Ah, yes, but he has got a heart."
 "Guess not. At all events I guess yer must have swapped wid a chicken. Soy, what's der use of cryin' for spilled milk?"
 "There may be no use in it, but the milk is lost all the same."
 "Oh, go buy some more. Soy, I'll tell yer what ter do, dad; buy some condensed milk next time; it won't spill so easily," he added, laughing at his father's discomforture.
 "All right; I'll show you what kind of milk I will buy. Just you telegraph for my lawyer, Mr. Townley, to come up here at once."
 "Cert."
 "When you got married, I changed my will in favor of your son. Now that he has also gone, and made a fool of himself, he shall not have a cent of my money. No, sir, I will found a hospital with it."
 "Good lick! Call it the Shorty Hospital for Sick Bachelors," suggested the little wag.
 "Never mind what I call it, I shall devote my fortune to founding a hospital, and cut you both off without a nickle."
 "Cut away, dad. I've got money enough of my own, an' so has the Kid, but if we haven't, my queen bee has got a plenty. So go ahead, dad, an' build

"Ice-water!" he ex-
 "Yes. I feel faint!"

"Well, here you are; but it'll take a pint of brandy to brace me up," said he, handing her the cooling beverage.

She drank it, and again settled back into the softness of her seat, closing her eyes with another sigh, while Shorty rung for a bracer in the shape of brandy and water.

Neither of them spoke for some time, during which she loosened her corsets and let down her back hair. When a woman feels particularly bad these are apt to be the first things she does.

While she was out of the room Shorty again picked up the dispatch and read it. He read it forwards and backwards; he even tried to read it crosswise, but it told the same story.

Then he went to the clerk of the hotel and asked

"Well, that jumps the cake," said Shorty, as they recovered from their laugh.

"I should say it did."

"All three of us married! What'll the gang say when they hear it?"

"What will society—what will the world at large say at these alliances?"

"Don't ask me, Kate."

"Can it be possible that they stopped for one moment to realize what they were doing?"

Shorty shook his head sadly.

"Is it possible that they went blindly into this?"

"I guess they raised our 'blind,' and went us one better."

"One! ten better, more like. Now, just look at it," said she, earnestly.

"Never mind. And I am my step-son's mother-in-law, and his great grandmother."

"Can it be possible?"

"Figure it out for yourself."

"Nix; I was never good at figs. Go on—I'll take it all if it kills me," he added, settling back into the chair resignedly.

"Well, now, let us see how it will be with your father."

"Give it to ther old duffer!" said he, savagely.

"Oh, for that matter, he has given it to himself, for he is now the son-in-law of his own son, and brother-in-law to his grandson, since they have married sisters."

Shorty laughed for the first time since she had commenced upon the tangle."



"I am going to California, and leave these unfeeling sons of mine here," said he, and the tears she detected in his eye brought one from hers. "But do you really think, sir, that such a course would make you happier?" "Miss Angelina, I'm a broken-hearted father."

particulars regarding the time the old man went away, and whether he was really accompanied by Angelina Budge.

Yet everything that he could learn only confirmed it, and it was undoubtedly true.

Shorty felt sick. The little surprise that he had given his father and son in getting married himself had rebounded dreadfully, hitting him so hard that he was nearly paralyzed.

His wife felt the blow quite as keenly as he did, and for a long time refused to be comforted or even spoken to on the subject.

"Kate, ther milk is spilled sure," said he, and she answered with a groan. "They have both followed our example, old gal, but who in blazes would have ever dreamed it?"

"George, I'm all broken up," she sighed.

"I'm hashed."

"Only think of it."

"Don't ask me to."

"To think that your father—"

"Nix! He isn't my father."

"What's that?"

"Ram-jam it, he's my son-in-law!" exclaimed Shorty, bounding to his feet and stamping heavily across the room, while his wife fell back panting.

For fully two minutes not a word was exchanged between them. Finally Shorty rung for two more bracers, one for himself and one for his troubled wife; after drinking which they felt somewhat better, or at least stronger.

"Oh, George!"

"Oh, Kate!" they finally exclaimed, and then took a long look at each other.

The situation was one half comical the worst way they could look at it, and, after looking at each other a moment, they both broke up in a laugh.

Shorty squirmed uneasily in his seat.

"You are the father-in-law of your father."

"Oh, Lord!" he groaned.

"As well as of your own son."

"Oh, Moses!"

"And of your two step-daughters."

"Oh, my!"

"And since you are father-in-law to your father, your father's children must be your grand-children."

"Oh, don't, Kate!"

"Consequently you are your own grandson!"

Shorty tumbled out of his chair paralyzed upon the floor.

"Oh, don't weaken, George, for I am in quite as strange a mess by these marriages. Come, brace up, and hear the remainder," said she.

Shorty groaned and struggled back into his chair, the most dejected-looking mortal that ever combed hair.

"My own grandson, am I?" said he, sadly.

"Yes, don't you see?"

"I'll take your word for it, Kate; it is too knotty a snarl for me to untangle."

"Well, again. For the same reason you are the great-grandfather to your own son, Charley."

"Great snakes!"

"You are also your mother-in-law's step-father. See?"

"Yaller snakes!"

"And I am mother-in-law to my father-in-law."

"Black snakes!"

"And mother-in-law to my own daughter."

"Hold on, Kate, this will break me all up."

"I can't help it; it's no worse on you than it is on me. I am daughter-in-law to my own daughter, think of that!"

"I tell yer it breaks me up."

"I am his mother-in-law, and I am at the same time his daughter-in-law, and his sister-in-law is his grandchild."

"Great turtles!"

"Now here is a tangle worse than all."

"Give it ter him!"

"Of course, your son is his grandson, and as his wife is your daughter, she must also be his granddaughter, and he is his own grandson!"

"Murder, murder!"

"That's how it is. Now Charley is brother-in-law to his grandfather, and your son-in-law, as I explained before. His sister-in-law is his grandmother. His grandfather's father-in-law (which is you) becomes his great grandfather, consequently he is his own father's great grandson, and on this account, must be either his own son or his own nephew."

"Hold on, Kate, I weaken."

"But I have not got half done with the snarl and the possibilities which do and may yet attend this terrible matrimonial complication."

"I can't help it, I'm no hog. I know when I've got enough. My nut goes round like a buzz saw. Oh, what will Peter Pad say to this?"

"What will everybody say?" she exclaimed, while Shorty was thinking what it would be if I should write it up for *The Boys of New York*.

"Now, George, so long as we have begun the thing, you had better hear me through."

"No, no, I'm crazy now."

"Suppose father, son, and grandson each have a child what—"

"Police! police!" cried Shorty, and seizing his hat he rushed wildly from the room, while his wife fell back upon the sofa in a faint.

Rushing to the bar-room of the hotel, he ordered the artistic tosser to make him three cocktails, and drank

them one after the other in quick succession, greatly to the surprise of everybody who stood around.

Several of his friends spoke to him, but he paid no attention to them; indeed, he never looked up, but pulling his hat down over his eyes, he walked hurriedly from the hotel.

To say that he was paralyzed, or broken up, would but poorly express his condition. He was crushed, and those who saw him as he stumped along the sidewalk, jabbing his cane savagely down and looking at no one, must have thought that something dreadful had happened to the little joker who had never been seen before, except when sparkling with humor.

He kept on in this way until he reached Union Square, where, seeing a seat empty, he concluded to rest awhile.

Several acquaintances walked past and spoke to him, but he heeded them not.

"I guess marriage has proved too much for his nibs," remarked Tony Pastor, who noticed his strange behavior as he passed.

"Caught a tartar, perhaps," replied Harry Kennedy, who was in company with him.

"Poor fellow! he looks as though he had caught an assortment of fevers at the same time."

But he knew and cared nothing for what they or anybody else might say. His mind was too full of conundrums and puzzles, and of matrimonial complications, to have room for anything else just then.

"It's too much," he finally muttered; "too much even for a mule ter bear. Oh, why did I ever get married? Bah! I can't stand any more such conundrums ter-day. Wonder where I can find a good healthy man ter club me for an hour or so? I'd pay him well, and I guess 't would make me feel better. Guess I'll sass some big feller an' let him jump in on me. Whew!" and he wiped his sweating mug and pinched his own snoot. "Wonder who the deuce I am any way? I used ter be Shorty, an' George Burwick, but who in thunder am I now, I'd like ter know? Oh, why did I ever find my dad—my awful dad? Why was I ever a dad myself? They've both disgraced me; they've got me inter such a snarl that I don't know who I am—I don't even know who they are, or who my wife an' her relations are—I'm my own grandfather!" and here he broke completely down and said no more for several minutes.

"The first thing I know, everybody'll be guyin' me. Oh, I'm goin' to git out. I'll leave this bloody country; I never can stand all the laugh they'll give me, never!" and getting up, he slowly wended his way back to the hotel, remembering that his wife needed comforting, and that she was as deep in the mud as he was in the mire.

Then he found a telegram from the Kid, stating that he and his wife were at Cape May, happy as two turtle doves.

"Doves! I'd like to wring both their necks," growled Shorty, and then going down to the telegraph office, he sent this message to him:

"Come home at once. We are both of us very sick. SHORTY."

By this time, however, his wife had rallied somewhat from the blow. She told him how foolish it was to cry for spilled milk or broken eggs; that the thing was done, and that they should make the most of it.

But this did not console him much; it failed to cure him of his sickness.

Of course the reader knows that Shorty is by nature one of the greatest jokers known; that one half of his life has been spent in putting up jobs and getting laughs on other people; but the fact is, he is very much like many other jokers that I know, he hates dreadfully to have the laugh turned on him, and he knew it would be when this matrimonial relationship became known.

And so he growled and pouted, and tried to think of some way out of the complication, but he couldn't do it.

The next day the Kid and his wife came hurrying back to New York, filled with anxiety.

Rushing into their apartments, the anxious little couple found Shorty and his wife seated there in a most dejected mode. Indeed, they scarcely looked up as they came in.

"Hello! Soy, where's der sick?" asked the Kid, looking from one to the other.

"Mamma, are you ill?" asked Caddy, approaching.

"Soy, dad, what's up?"

Shorty put on his hat, walked to the door, and motioned him to follow, while his wife beckoned her daughter to a seat beside her.

The Kid was puzzled to make out what the dickens it meant, but Shorty soon told him, and then he understood what made him sick.

But instead of being paralyzed or taking it to heart as he did, the little fellow laughed heartily, and swore it was the best thing he had ever heard of in his life.

"Well, soy, der yer know what you are?"

"Well," replied the Kid, laughing, "guess I'm one of der gang now, if I wasn't before?"

"Soy, yer yer own son an' nephew, an' I'm my own grandfather."

"What are yer givin' me?"

"Go ask my wife—that is, yer mother an' yer mother-in-law. She'll show yer how it is," replied Shorty, bitterly.

"Oh, it's a mix, hey?"

"Well, I should murmur!"

"Great snap, eh, dad?" suggested the Kid. "Why, we'll have heaps of fun out of this."

"Heaps of— I don't catch on."

"An' so grandpop's my brother-in-law?"

"Bah! that isn't a quarter of it."

"An' Angie's my sister-in-law an' my mother-in-law. I never thought of that," he mused.

"I tell yer that arn't a quarter of it."

"All right. I'll gether ole gal to give it ter me."

But, soy, don't dat yank ther biseuit—ther old man married!"

"I should say it did."

"Well, this is ther famliest old family that ever was, Where is his nibs?"

"Up ter Niag."

"Havin' a regular taffy moon, hey?"

"Don't mention it."

"Now, soy, won't we give him a roast when he comes back?"

"Bah! how yer goin' ter make a roast out of a stew?" demanded Shorty.

"Stew?"

"Yer've heard of family stews, haven't yer?"

"Cert."

"Well, I should say we were all in one."

"Oh, never mind. Brace up an' see ther fun we'll have out of this thing. We'll give him a roast that'll do for us two," said the little joker, making a pun "stew."

"I can't see any fun in the business, only for outsiders; when they hear about it, an' wherever we go we'll be sure ter get ther grand laugh on our relationship. Think of my being yer father-in-law an' yer dad; but worst of all, think of my being my own grandfather!"

"I can't make it out."

"Well, it's so; she'll show it ter yer."

"Ha, ha, ha! dat claws der bisk!"

"But think of ther laugh."

"All right; it'll be a good ad."

"Ad be hanged; we arn't in the show biz now, although there's no doubt but what we're making a 'holy show' of ourselves. But there never was such a thing happened before in ther world."

"Well, dat's bully for ther Shortys. Soy, we'll have more fun out of this snap than we ever had before in the world, an' don't drop der ticket that we won't."

"Fun!" cried Shorty, bitterly.

"Cert. But come. I want ter know who I am an' all 'bout der whole racket," said he, leading the way back to his mother, where she sorrowfully explained the relationship which now existed between them.

(N. B. See my card in another column).

The little fellow was greatly surprised to hear the matter explained, as was his wife, but he insisted upon it that there would be heaps of fun grow out of it after all.

This, however, did not make either Shorty or his wife feel much better, for their idea was that the fun would all be against them.

But they knew, of course, that they had to brace up and make the most of it, only all of them but the Kid wanted to get in on the old man who had put a climax to the trouble.

The next day he dawned upon them with his blushing bride. He actually looked thirty years younger than he did the last time they had seen him, and was as frisky as a three-year-old.

The reception took place in Shorty's parlor, but it was a cool old reception, for as he and his wife danced into the room, the party never looked up or welcomed him at first.

"Hello! how's this? Gone back on me just because I did something that you two did? Not a word of welcome or congratulation? Well, this is cool, I must say. But we don't care, do we, Angie? We're happy, eh?" he asked, turning to his bride.

"Yes, indeed we are, sir," she replied, resolutely.

"Oh, Angie! how ever did you do it?" moaned her mother, looking at her, reproachfully.

"Why, the same as you did," said she, archly.

"Good, good, my hunk of sweetness!" said the old man.

"Oh, Angie, what have you done?" asked the Kid's wife.

"Why, the same as you have, to be sure."

"Dad, you've done it," moaned Shorty.

"I know it."

"Yer've put yer big foot in it, pop," said the Kid.

"No, I'll be hanged if I have," he replied, smartly.

"Are you all mad at us for following your examples?" asked Angie, with a pout.

They all groaned.

"What is the matter with you all?" asked the old man.

"What's ther matter?" exclaimed Shorty. "Why, yer my son-in-law."

"An' my brother-in-law," chimed in the Kid.

"And both my son and son-in-law," said Shorty's wife.

"And I am your granddaughter and your sister-in-law," said the Kid's wife, at which both the old man and his wife began to open their eyes.

"You are yer own grandson!"

"Your sister-in-law is your grandmother!"

"And I am your grandmother!" said the Kid's wife.

"You are simply nobody in particular; you have married yourself out of existence," said Shorty's wife.

"Thunder and blazes!" exclaimed the old man, as he looked wildly about, "I never thought about that, did you, Angie?"

"Indeed no!" said she, faintly, at the same time commencing to turn very white.

"You've broken us all up, and we can't put the pieces together again; oh, dear, oh, dear!"

"Great Moses!" and the old man and his wife tumbled down all wilted, and the others fell upon them with loud, lugubrious howls.

A terribly united but broken up family!

CHAPTER IV.

It was some moments before old Mr. Burwick recovered from his wilt at hearing the dreadful family tangle that his marriage with Angelina Budge had produced, but they all finally got upon their chairs again, and looked solemnly at each other in silence.

The reader remembers the circumstances under which he married, and, to tell the truth, he had not stopped before doing it to consider what a mess his marriage would produce. But now the whole thing flashed upon both he and his wife, and they were quite as sick as any of them.

For at least a minute not a word was spoken by either one of that much married family.

"We're in for it now for sure," mused Shorty. "But what do yer think about it?" he added, turning upon the astonished old man.

"Why, I—I can scarcely understand it," he replied, hesitatingly.

"Well, I should say not."

"Perhaps you would like to have me write it out for you, father—or son-in-law, which shall I call you?" said Shorty's wife.

"Oh, dat's all right; der ole man's my brod-in-law," said the Kid, laughing.

"Worse than that, I'm his daughter-in-law, and at the same time his mother-in-law!"

"I'm his sister-in-law and his grandchild," said the Kid's wife, half crying.

"Good gracious!" said he, sadly.

"Your son's son is your grandson, and as your wife is your son's daughter, and she is your granddaughter, you are, therefore, your own grandson."

"Murder! police!" cried the bewildered old bridegroom, as the truth flashed upon him.

"An' soy, Angie, you are my sister-in-law an' my grandmother! How's dat for away up?" asked the Kid, with a grin.

"Mercy, mercy!" cried Angelina.

"An' what are you?" demanded Shorty, of the Kid.

"Give it up! Ask me an easier one."

"I'll tell you what you are," said Shorty's wife.

"Your grandfather's father-in-law (Shorty) is, of course, your great grandfather, consequently you are your own father! How is that?"

"Bang up! Always thought I'd like ter be independent of relations," replied the Kid.

"Well, you have got it now."

"Whew! this takes my breath away."

"Dear, oh, dear, what shall we do?" moaned Angelina, wringing her hands, for the situation struck her as being terrible.

"Who would have thought it?"

"Anybody would, if they'd only stopped ter think," growled Shorty.

"But you set the example."

"True," replied Shorty's wife, "but our marriage did not complicate matters at all, while your's certainly has."

"Well, I see no way out of it."

"We don't want ter get out or it," said the Kid, getting up and walking the floor.

"Why not?" asked Angie, his sister-in-law and his grandmother.

"Cos we'll have lots of fun out of it."

"Fun!"

"Fun!"

"Fun!"

"Oh, yes, heaps of fun," groaned Shorty.

"Cert. Brace up! We can't give up our gals, an' we don't want ter, so let's make ther best of it an' have a laugh," said the little fellow.

"Laugh! I'm afraid the laugh will all be on the other side," said the old man.

"What side?" asked the Kid.

"The outside, my son."

"Ah! Don't call me yer son, I'm yer brother. What's ther matter with yer?"

The old man groaned, as did the others, and for at least another minute there was dead silence, but a good deal of thinking.

"Wal, soy. This is sort of a family chowder, eh?" asked the Kid, the first to speak.

"I should say so," replied Shorty, bitterly.

"Good 'nough. I'll brace."

"How?"

"Caddy an' I'll take our share of it, eh, Cad?" he added, sliding his arm around her waist.

"Of course, I'll do anything that you do, Charley," said she, quickly.

"Dat settles it. We're gwine ter take our third of ther chowder all ther time. Now how about you other duffers?" he asked, turning to the people who had formerly been his father and grandfather.

"I'll swallow mine," said the old man.

"Good for high!"

"So there is only a third of the chowder left now; what do you say, George?" asked Shorty's wife.

"Give it ter me with a spoon, birdy," said he, kissing her.

"But I'm no spoon-bill."

"Yes, yer are; yer a duck, arn't yer?"

"Yes a duck, but she can't swim out," suggested the Kid.

"And I don't wish to. I am sorry there is such a complication, but I see no help for it now, so let us face the world and join in the laugh if there is one raised against us."

"Bully for mother-in-law!" said the Kid.

"Bully for mother-in-law and daughter-in-law," said the old man.

"We will live together, and be just as happy as the days are long. But we won't live in a hotel. We will buy a nice house somewhere—"

"I don't want ter live in an ice-house, ma," said the Kid, interrupting her.

"Charles, don't be so slippery with your remarks. As I was saying, we will buy a nice house on Fifth avenue or some other good locality, and all live together happily."

"Cert."

"Yer bet."

"A grand idea," were the three expressions the husbands made use of in approval.

"And it shall be my part to buy the house and to furnish it throughout," said old Mr. Burwick.

"Bully for my dad!"

"Bully for my grandpop!"

"Good for my father-in-law!"

"Good for my brother-in-law!"

"Good for my brother-in-law!"

"Bully for my step-son!" said Shorty, commencing on another tack.

"Hold on! Please don't!" pleaded the old man, seeing that they were going on with the relationship. "Don't let us say anything more about that. It is done and cannot be helped, but rather let us do as my—that is, my George's wife suggests, and pass the remainder of our days in associated and individual happiness."

"Shake!" said both Shorty and the Kid, and father, son, and grandson shook hands earnestly, as did Shorty's wife and her two daughters.

"I'll go right out and see about buying a house," said the old man.

"And we will go and select the furniture, carpets, and other appurtenances," said Shorty's wife.

"Good, but be sure that you select the best. Do not mind the cost; I am able to pay for it."

"An' Gawge an' Chawles will go an' select a bottle of wine," said the Kid, in his comical way, and with the laughter that it occasioned they started to go upon their several errands.

And so, after a short season of mourning and lamentation over the remarkable snarl into which they had unwittingly gotten themselves, the natural goodness of the entire family asserted itself, and good feeling was once more restored.

Mr. Burwick, oldest, but youngest married, of the convivial trio, never felt happier in his life than he did now, and the prospect of a reunited family made him feel rich and generous.

He bought a house near Central Park, on a very toney street, for which he paid fifty thousand dollars; and Shorty's wife took it upon herself to buy and pay for elegant furniture, so that in less than a month they were ready to go to housekeeping in the nobbiest kind of style.

Indeed, they had everything that money could buy or heart wish for, including carriages and servants galore.

Speaking of servants, Shorty took a fancy to a colored man named Ginger Jones, whom he had known for some time, and hired him for a waiter, but at the same time with an eye to the possible fun that might be got out of him in the future; for notwithstanding he was a good waiter, he was one of the most comical coons in the world.

He was blacker than his own pocket, in a deep cellar on a dark night, but holding a very high opinion of himself, both as regarded his looks and his capabilities as a waiter.

Ginger was hired to wait upon the table and make himself generally useful; a sort of "boss of all de waiters," while each family had a special waiter to look after their wants, to say nothing of the cook and laundress. The cook, by the way, was one of the best in New York, but she was Irish, and had her own views of things.

It was arranged that Shorty's wife should have the general direction of things, and so they entered upon a brand-new life to them all, or at least to the Shortys, brim full of hope and high expectations of happiness—and fun.

And, in truth, they were the happiest, jolliest family ever gotten together. Every one of them liked fun, and being situated as they were, there was no reason why they should not have all they wanted of it.

Soon after getting settled in this way, they gave a house-warming, to which a large number of their friends were invited, myself among the number; and one of the most enjoyable evenings of my life was put in on that occasion.

By the way, the note that I received from Shorty in lieu of a formal invitation which the others received, was characteristic of my little friend, and so I give it here:

"DEAR PETE: You know we are all married and settled down, and a mixture of Shortys or Burwicks desire you to join them in warming our house, on Wednesday evening. Be sure and come, for without you we couldn't warm the old thing worth a cent. Bring 'Ed' along, but use the inclosed five dollars to give him something to eat before he comes, just to take the edge off his appetite, so the other folks can have a show for feed. Any friend of yours is welcome. Your old friend, "SHORTY."

All three of the Shortys and their wives were looking first-rate. Indeed, I never saw them looking finer than they did, as all three of them, in full evening dress, received their friends and made them at home.

A great many professionals were there, and earnest and genuine were the congratulations which this much-married family received, and it was here that the laughs first begun to crop out, as the company talked over the marriage relations of the three mixed but happy couples, although they had so far recovered from their first grief over the mix, that they no longer felt sensitive about the matter, and joined heartily in the fun of the thing.

Dancing, followed by a magnificent supper, helped the jocund hours along, but as a final wind up, we requested Shorty to make a speech on his banjo for us; not having heard him play for some time, and being anxious to know if he was still boss of that little instrument.

He obliged us, and we very soon found that getting married had not taken the music out of him, and that he was still king of the cat-gut.

"Now give us a speech, Shorty," suggested Tony Pastor, and we all applauded the idea.

The little fellow laughed, but soon began one of his famous impromptu songs. I give one verse:

"We're happy, though we're badly mixed,
An' can't tell which from t'other,
An' can't tell hardly how we're fixed,
Who's father or who's mother,
But still if what we six have done,
Is not enough ter suit yer,
There still may be a further mix,
To greet you in the future."

The applause which greeted his effort sounded like old times, and the further complications which he hinted at, set everybody to laughing and trying to figure the thing out as they wended their way homeward.

But in spite of the laugh, it was agreed by all that the Shortys married and settled constituted the happiest family in New York.

"Pete, ole man, yer must come an' see us very often, an' we'll make it pleasant for yer," said he, shaking hands with me at parting.

"You may depend upon it that I shall."

"But, soy, Pete, don't yer give this thing away."

"How?"

"Why, write it up for THE BOYS OF NEW YORK, same as yer have all our other rackets."

"Certainly not—oh, no!"

Nothing like keeping your word, is there? But I don't see why the boys who have known them so long, should not learn all about their last hurrah. Shorty would be sure to give it to anybody else, if he had it in his power to do so, and as I have made him a public character, I now consider him my own and the property of my readers.

"Oh, no, Jawge, I won't give it away!"

Well, things moved along just as nicely as though they had been greased. They had some difficulty in settling about what their relations were, but they finally concluded to call each other anything that they happened to think of, and let it go at that, although it vexed Angie somewhat to be called grandma by the Kid, and the old man squirmed sometimes when Shorty addressed him as "my son."

But with these few exceptions everything went smooth, save when somebody played a practical joke on somebody else, which, by the bye, was quite often, although the effect of them was soon laughed away.

For instance, the old man ordered a new pair of boots—a dandy pair—and Shorty happened to receive them when they were brought home, the old fellow being out driving at the time. You know it would not be Shorty if he didn't do something to those boots.

The old man wore them the next day and was highly pleased with them, but when he attempted to pull them off at night, they stuck to his feet like bark to a tree.

He pulled and pulled, but they would not budge a peg. Perhaps it was because they were not pegged boots, but we won't argue the point.

He hadn't used a cuss word for a long time, but he felt like doing so now. In fact, he felt like kicking himself out of the boots by using them against their maker.

Finally his wife and servant came to his assistance. They tugged at them, but all in vain, and by this time he was in a high state of perspiration.

"Go and call George," he finally said to the servant girl. "They are new boots, and my feet have swollen."

"It is too bad," quietly remarked his wife.

"Whew! I'll nearly murder that shoemaker, for I know he never made them on my last."

At that moment Shorty and the Kid came in.

"What's the matter, my son?" asked Shorty.

"Hello, brother, what's up?" chipped in the Kid.

"Better ask what's on, and what I can't get off. See if you can pull off these boots; they stick as close as my toe nails," said he.

"Well, perhaps yer toe nails have grown fast to them," and Shorty attempted to pull off the boot, the Kid pulling him as he pulled on it.

But it stuck closer than a creditor.

"Whew! that's what you get by trying to be a dandy. Why don't you have your bug-crushers made large enough for you?" asked Shorty.

"Confound it, they were made on my last, and seemed to go on and fit all right. But it must be that my feet have swollen. Try them once more."

"Nixy. Go hire a mule. Ellen, go and call Ginger here; he's as strong as old cheese."

"Well, hurry up," and the girl went to obey.

"Are you sure they were made on your last?"

"Yes, but it will be his last, you bet."

"Goin' to make him peg out?" asked the Kid.

"Yes, he's getting run down at the heel."

"He'll sew yer, sonny," put in Shorty.

"No, he's a whole-souled fellow—he won't do that."

"Do be quiet, will you. Here, Ginger, see if you can pull off this boot," he added, as the coon came into the room.

"Better nail yerself to de char, sah," suggested Ginger, grinning.

"What for?"

"'Cos I's putty strong, sah, an' I might pull you out on de flo'."

"Oh, I'll risk it. Go ahead!"

The scene which followed was comical. Ginger got straddle of the old man's leg and took the boot in his hands for a pull. Mrs. Burwick and the servant held upon him so as to keep him in the chair, while Shorty seized a cane and began to whip up the darkey to make him do his best, and the Kid was yelling at him.

"Be quiet, I tell you—pull steady, Ginger!" cried the old man, but the boot didn't move.

But Shorty became impatient, and hitting the darkey a smart blow, caused him to jump and lose his hold, when away he pitched headlong, butting his head

through a fancy Japanese screen, while the reaction sent the old man over backwards with his wife and servant.

"Murder!" yelled he, struggling to get up, while Ginger was trying to get his head out of the screen.

"Set 'em up again!" cried Shorty.

"What's der matter, Ginger; pull his leg off?" asked the Kid, of the darkey.

"Guess not; didn't even get de boot off."

"Now, Shorty, will you be quiet; you was the means of making him do that," said the old fellow, as they assisted him to his feet.

"Oh, yes; lay it ter me when I was tryin' ter help pull yer boot off. But what yer goin' ter do?"

"Hang me if I know. They apper to stick to my feet like glue."

"Guess yer'll have ter sleep in 'em, brother," remarked the Kid.

"Yes, my son, you had best sleep in 'em, and by mornin' ther swellin' will be out of yer feet," said Shorty.

"Sleep in his boots!" said Angie, holding up her hands in astonishment.

"No, no, that will never do."

"All right; then I'll tell yer how ter get out of them, my gentle brother-in-law," said the Kid.

"How?"

"Bore a hole an' fill it full of gunpowder an' touch a match ter it."

"Oh, Charley! How can you?" cried Angie.

"How can I? Easiest thing in the world."

"Don't listen to his nonsense, my dear."

"Who ever heard of such an idea?"

"Well, cut 'em down der side, an' skin 'em off same's yer undress an eel," said Shorty.

"Oh, you fellows shut up and clear out. Here, Ginger, go down and see old Peg, the shoemaker, and tell him to come here at once."

"Yes, sah."

"Tell him what the trouble is, and, perhaps, he will know what to do. Come, hurry up."

"I've gone, sah," and he vanished.

"Guess yer corns got ter growin' after yer put on der boots, an' that's filled 'em up chuck full," suggested the Kid.

"Clear out, I tell you!" roared the old man, now just about wild enough to fly.

"We dust."

"We scrape," and out the two jokers went, for, in truth, they didn't care to be there when the shoemaker came, for he would probably find out the trick.

Well, he came, and requesting the ladies to leave the room for a few moments, the old man just humped himself, and treated that shoemaker to some of the most explosive language that he had ever heard.

He tried to explain, but the old fellow would not listen to him, and then he tried to pull off the boots, but could not. He protested that they were made upon his regular last, but Burwick would not believe it. Finally Peg took a sharp knife and ripped the seam from top to bottom, and even then had the greatest difficulty in pulling the boot from his customer's foot.

"What in thunder is this on the inside?" he asked, looking at it after getting it off.

"How the blazes should I know?"

"Why, the entire boot is lined with mucllager!"

"What?" exclaimed Burwick, leaping up.

"Look for yourself, sir," and he did look. There was no mistake about it.

"One of that rascally Shorty's tricks, I'll bet a thousand dollars. Where is the villain?"

CHAPTER V.

GINGER JONES went in search of Shorty and the Kid, while Peg, the shoemaker, proceeded to rip open the old man's other boot and peel it off as before.

But Shorty and the Kid had skipped, leaving word that they had gone out to play a few games of billiards somewhere.

"Oh, the rascals! Oh, let me get my hands on them!" roared the old man, and then he proceeded to peel off his socks, which stuck closer to his feet than the skin does to an eel, and came off about as reluctantly.

"Do you call that a joke, sir?" asked Peg, looking at him with wonder.

"Joke! Confound those two sons of mine! they are forever playing some prank or other on me. But I'll fix 'em, you bet."

"Well, I should call it rather an expensive joke, for the boots are spoiled."

"Oh, the rascal! Take them away and make me another pair, and charge it to Shorty, and see that you deliver them to me and no one else."

"Very well, sir."

"And I'll break them in by kicking those two fellows with them, see if I don't."

"It would serve 'em just right, sah," said Ginger, anxious to cap in.

"Shut up, sir! What do you know about it, anyway?" roared the old man, for although he was down on his boys himself, he would not allow anybody else to say a word against them.

Ginger instantly became as dumb as an oyster, and both he and Peg withdrew, leaving the old fellow to wash his feet, and mutter to himself what he would do with the jokers.

His wife came into the room presently, and he finally explained to her the cause of the trouble, telling her at the same time that the boys were continually playing tricks on him, and that he would get good and even with them for this one.

"I know they are great rogues," said she, "and the best way will be to play back a trick on them that will pay them for their fun."

"You may be assured I will."

"And I will help you."

"Good. We'll think of something that will make them sick," said he, while a smile began to steal over his benevolent mug.

They all met at breakfast the next morning, but the old man was not looking in his usual smiling mood. There was a "heap ob trouble on de ole man's mind," for he was trying to think of a joke of some kind to play upon his sons.

"Good-morning, my son-in-law. How do you feel this morning?" asked Shorty.

"I'll let you know how I feel," growled the old man.

"That's what I asked yer ter do."

"I'd like to feel for you two fellows with a club."

"Why, bub-in-law, what's ther matter? Soy, didn't yer sleep good last night?" asked the Kid.

"Guess he slept with his boots on."

"Oh, you call that laughing, do you?"

"Yes, sah; best I can do, sah."

"Well, what the deuce was you laughing at?" demanded the old man.

"I was thinkin' 'bout dem boots, sah."

"What business have you to think?"

"Couldn't help it, sah."

"Soy, wasn't yer laughin' at ther way yer poked yer head through dat Jap screen?" asked the Kid, and this only made him laugh the more.

"Shut clam!" roared Shorty, and instantly Ginger's jaws came together with a snap that sounded like spanking your hands, and he at once became as sober as an owl, whereat the family resumed their breakfast.

This little piece of by-play restored good humor so

"Wal, dat takes der huckleberry!" said the Kid.

"I should say that the shirts had taken the huckleberry," remarked Shorty's wife, laughing.

"That's a queer way to mark shirts anyway, right across the front."

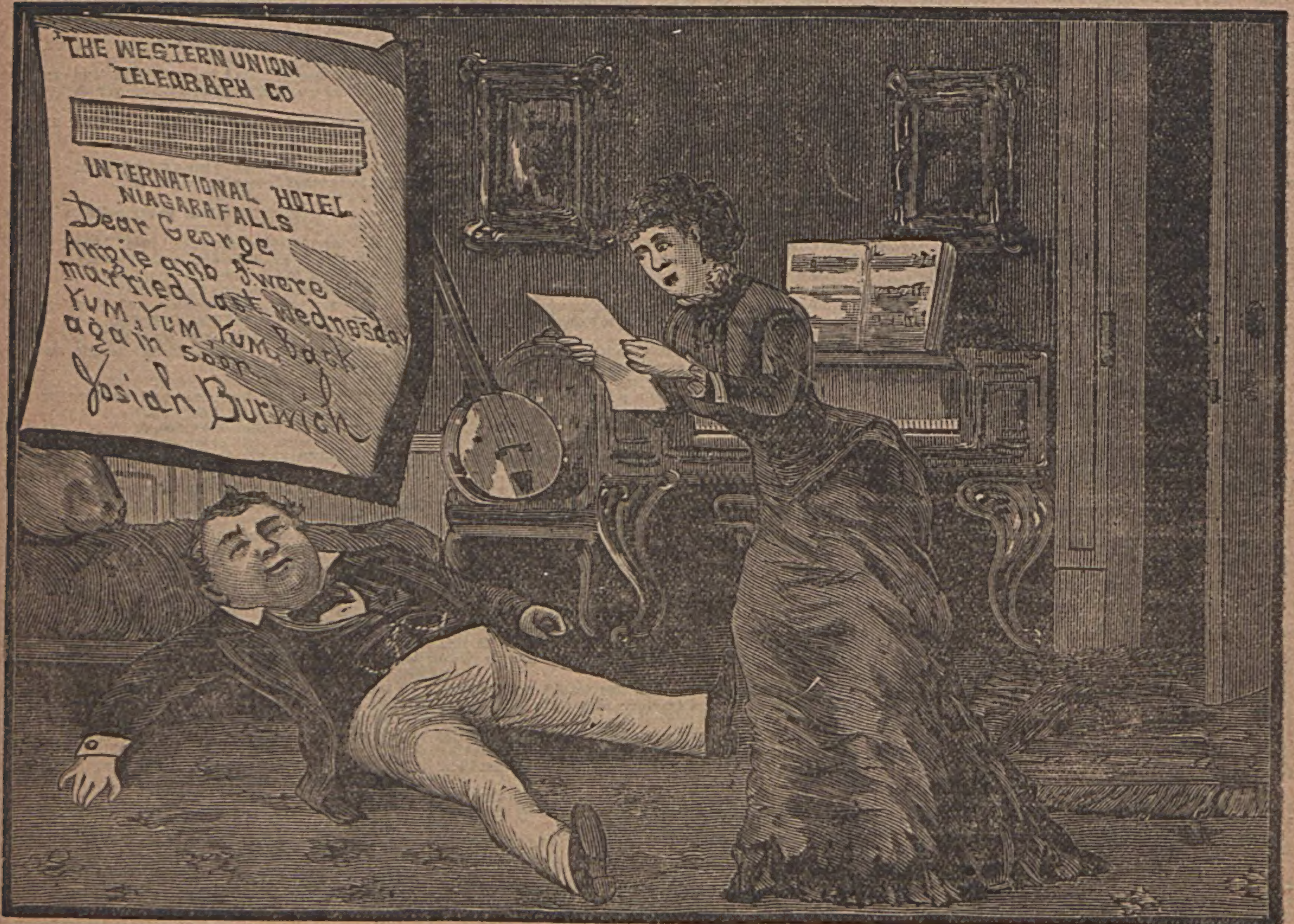
"And then to make such a mistake and mark them wrong," added Angie, and then a general laugh was indulged in.

Shorty and the Kid swapped winks.

"Tumb!" asked Shorty.

"I tumb," replied the little fellow, and it was understood between them that the old man had worked a snap on them to get hunk for the boot racket.

So they laughed and made believe that they thought some crazy man at the shirt-maker's had marked them, although they could not for the life of them



When Shorty read it he fell all of a heap upon the floor, and his wife, thinking that something dreadful had happened, picked up the message and read it, after which she gave a yell, and fell over on top of her husband.

"You shut up. I'll boot you fellows."

"Soy, how much'll yer give ter boot?"

"Never mind what I'll give; it will cost you twenty dollars."

"What! got ter pay twenty dollars ter get booted? Now, soy, isn't that a trife rough on yer old father-in-law?" asked Shorty.

"An' think 'bout yer poor brod-in-law."

"That's all right, young fellows, but if you dance, you must pay the piper."

"Der gas-piper?"

"Oh, yer pipin' us off, my son."

"No, no, he's talking about Piper Heldsick," remarked Shorty's wife pleasantly.

"All right, but I wish those runts to understand that they can't play any of their practical jokes on me with impunity," retorted the old man.

"With who?" asked Shorty.

"With impunity."

"Don't know him."

"I do. He's a brother to opportunity."

"Does he live in this community?" asked Caddy, the Kid's wife, for they were all ready to catch on to a little thing.

"No, he's a tramp, wears tight boots," said Shorty, whereat Ginger, who was waiting on the table, lost control of his chin and laughed right out, which occasioned all eyes to center on him.

The old man frowned and Shorty turned around in his chair to get a better look at the moke, who seemed to be trying to split his head open crosswise.

"Soy, what's der trouble wid yer mouth?"

"Begg pardon, sah, but—"

"Ah! No butting here."

"I—I begg pardon, sah; I—I couldn't help it," replied Ginger.

"Couldn't help what?"

"Laughing, sah."

far as the old man was concerned, and breakfast was finished pleasantly.

But he had not given up the idea of playing a joke back on the boys, for he wished to show his wife that he was just as smart at that business as they were any time.

Well, during the day something occurred that gave him a chance, and the old fellow was equal to it.

Shorty and the Kid were out somewhere, probably out for a drive, when a messenger from a gentleman's furnishing goods store brought home half a dozen dress shirts for both of the little jokers, and the old man received them.

Going to a chemist, he got him to prepare a colorless marking fluid; that is to say, it was colorless when first applied, but after being exposed to the light a short time the marks became black as ink.

Taking the shirts from the boxes, he proceeded to business. Right across the bosom of Shorty's shirts he wrote, "The Kid," and in like manner he wrote "Shorty" on the bosom of the Kid's shirts, after which he placed them back carefully, and sent them to their chambers by Ginger.

This tickled the old man and his wife greatly, and they laughed heartily over what they felt certain would be a good sell.

And so it proved to be, for the next day Shorty and the Kid appeared in their new shirts, and before they got through breakfast the lettering appeared in startling style.

"Why, George! what have you got on your shirt?" asked Shorty's wife, the first to see it.

"Look! The Kid. You have got on Charley's shirt," cried the Kid's wife.

"And Charley has got on his, I should say," said Angie, pointing to the Kid's shirt front.

"What ther deuce!" exclaimed Shorty, looking first at his own and then at the Kid's shirt front.

make out why it was that they had not seen the names when they put them on.

But they laughed the matter off, and soon began to talk about going out to see the races at Jerome Park, and they finally agreed that each couple would go out with their own teams.

"Great graft, eh?" said Shorty, after he and the Kid were alone together in the billiard-room.

"Cert. Old man did it for fun."

"That's all right, but just hush! See what a job we'll put up on him for hunk."

"Let's make him sick."

"Don't lose yer grip, dat we will."

And so the matter dropped for the time being—but when they got ready to dress for their drive out to the races, they both put on two of the same new shirts—seeing nothing wrong with them.

Half an hour afterwards all three couples were spanking along through the beautiful drives leading to Jerome Park, for each one of them owned a nice turn out.

The excitement of the drive was so great, that they never noticed that the names had appeared on their shirt fronts, and it was not until they had reached the race course that they dropped to it.

Then they were mad. There they were, far from shirts and home, and their names sticking out so conspicuously from their shirt fronts, that they could be read rods away.

"Oh, he's warmed us this time," said Shorty.

"Wal, I should say so."

"What the deuce shall we do?"

"Hang me if I know."

"Wonder if he did do it?"

"Cert. Don't think ther shirt-maker would mark 'em like that, do yer?"

"Don't seem poss."

"Course not. Der ole rooster worked it on us for sure. But only wait, dat's all," said Shorty, and buttoning up their coats, so as to hide their marks, they sauntered among the pool-sellers.

But they were a great ways from being happy, for the day was very sultry, and those who knew them wondered at seeing their coats buttoned up to their chins, to say nothing of the uncomfortable part of the business.

The old man and his wife, however, were enjoying it hugely; enjoying the sad discomfiture of the little jokers as much as he did the races.

That evening at dinner Shorty and the Kid came into the dining-room with clean shirts on, and as gaslight does not have the effect upon the marking as sunlight does, they did not appear, consequently they concluded

"Why, by cupping—hot cups."

"Go to blazes."

"Well, we shall be obliged to do that in order to heat our cups," said the student, laughing.

"Is old Pump such a druling idiot as to think that he can send a couple of his students here to experiment upon me?"

"Oh, it's very simple."

"So is rheumatism."

"Well, which do you prefer?"

"Rheumatism," he replied, decidedly.

"But we are sent here to warm that trouble out of you, and we are going to obey orders if it kills the patient."

"What! Now look here, if you duffers don't get out

"They've come here from old Pump and insist upon cupping me for my rheumatism."

"Well, what's ther kick?"

"Why, I don't want them to cup me, and I'll be hanged and quartered if they shall cup me."

"Why, it's der best thing in ther world for yer tism," said Shorty.

"Soy, yer a kicker all der time. What's der matter wid yer? S'pose we want yer gruntin' round here all ther time?" asked the Kid.

"But I tell you that I had rather have the rheumatism than be cured in such a way."

"We must obey orders," said one of the students.

"Cert. Go ahead," replied Shorty.

"What! do you abandon me?" roared the old man, turning upon his boys.



Shorty became impatient, and hitting the darkey a smart blow, caused him to jump and lose his hold, when away he pitched headlong, butting his head through a fancy Japanese screen, while the reaction sent the old man over backwards with his wife and servant.

and that they had reached the bottom of the joke, and so joined in the laugh that stood against them.

But the next morning when daylight came, out came the names as bold as ever.

"Soy," said the Kid, when they got a chance to speak by themselves, "this beats boots."

"Well, I should say so," replied Shorty.

"Der ole man caught us out bad this time, didn't he?"

"Yes, but yer just wait. I've got a dose for him, an' don't forget it."

But the dose that Shorty had for the old man was not such an easy one to give, and it was not for a whole week that he got a show at him.

The old man was troubled with the rheumatism considerably, and of course he was forever trying some remedy or other to get relief from it, but seldom succeeding in doing so for any length of time.

And when he had another of these attacks was when Shorty came in with his little joke, having stood in with the doctor, who sent two of his students to attend on him.

They found the old fellow alone in his room, grunting, growling, and swearing at his aches and pains, his wife having gone out for a walk.

"Well, Mr. Burwick, how do yo feel this afternoon?" asked one of the students.

"Oh, curse this rheumatism; I have got it just as bad as ever. Where is Dr. Pump?"

"Out visiting patients; but he sent us here to fix you in his stead."

"To fix me! What in thunder do you mean?" roared the old fellow.

"Why, to cup you."

"Cup me! What in ram-jam-nathan is that?"

"Oh, we'll show you. We are going to cure you of your rheumatism."

"How?"

of this I'll pull a pop on you," roared the old man, leaping to his feet.

"Oh, we don't care for pops; we're used to them," replied the student, carelessly.

"Used to them!"

"Yes. Dr. Pump keeps us for his heavy work."

"Heavy work!"

"Yes, lunatics and kickers."

"The dence he does!"

"Yes. We received orders to come here and cup this rheumatism out of you, so peel."

"Peel!"

"Certainly. Get right down to your skin," replied the student, uncovering the pail of hot water containing the metal cups.

"Confound you and your cups. Get out of my house this instant."

"Oh, no. He told us you were a kicker, and so we came prepared."

"Prepared!"

"Yes, sir; so peel."

"I'll see you rammed, crammed, and jammed first, and then I won't. Here, Ginger!" he cried.

Ginger was near at hand, and so were Shorty and the Kid.

"Did you call, sah?" he asked, entering the room.

"Yes; go and bring Shorty here quick. Tell him to bring his revolver."

"Yes, sah," and Ginger vanished.

"No use, old man; we're going to cup you," said the student.

"Not until you kill me."

"All right."

At that instant Ginger returned with Shorty and the Kid.

"Put these fellows out, boys."

"What for?"

"Nix; but if der doc says cup, why cup, dat's all."

"But I refuse. Ginger, run them out!"

"Dey's too many fo' me, sah," replied Ginger.

"Then go for a policeman."

"Dey's all off on a picnic ter day, sah."

"You lie, you thunder-cloud! There is a conspiracy here, and you are in it."

"I isn't in nuffin, sah, but debt."

"Come, peel!" said the student, now all ready to apply the cups.

"Will you witness this outrage, Shorty?"

"No, I's going out. Come on, Kiddy."

"And you abandon me?"

"Nix. Brace up an' show yer nerve."

"Never. Ginger, I command you to help me fight these ruffians out of here."

"I's no fighter, sah; I's a walter."

"Confound you all. This is a job."

"Yes, and you seem inclined to make it a pretty tough one. But if worst comes to worst we shall be obliged to strip you ourselves. Will you peel?"

"Never!"

"Stay here an' help 'em, Ginger, for the ole man must be cured," said Shorty, as he and the Kid left the room.

"Don't one of you dare to lay hands on me," roared the now infuriated old victim.

"We must obey orders, sir."

"Get out of this!"

"Not until we have cupped you."

"Murder!"

"No good, boss," and they went for him.

In spite of his struggles, his swearing and his protests, they got him out of his clothes in short order, and flat upon the bed.

He yelled murder, but it did him no good, and with a piece of stout rope, they bound him flat upon his

back in such a way that he could not move hand or foot.

Then the students began to apply the hot cups to his body, each one of which set very close and so warm that he yelled murder as each was put upon him.

"I'll have each one of you villains in State's prison for this, see if I don't," he cried.

"Oh, no, you wouldn't go back on a person for curing you, I guess."

"Confound you and your cure. Oh! Stop it! I've got no rheumatism, I tell you."

"What, have you been making believe that you had it all this time?"

"Yes—yes, I never had any rheumatism."

"Can't help it, sir; we must obey orders."

"Well, it will keep you from having it on some other occasion," suggested the other student.

"Confound you— Oh! stop it! What is it your business whether I have the rheumatism or not? I'll have the gout if I want to; it is none of your jammed business."

"That is so, but when the doctor sends us to cup a patient of his, we cup him; and don't care a snap what he says about it."

"Then I'll murder old Pump."

"All right; that won't hurt us. There you are," said the student, after he had applied the last cup to his body, "and it isn't such a terrible bad thing after all. Ginger, don't you remove one of those cups, or allow anybody else to, until they have been on half an hour."

"All right, sah."

"Good-bye, Mr. Burwick."

"Go to the devil!"

"Yes, we are going to report to the old man."

"Tell him I'll murder him."

"All right," and the students left the room and the old man in charge of Ginger Jones.

Shorty and the Kid came in soon afterwards and beheld a sight at which they could not help laughing, and while they were doing so, Angelina, the old man's wife, came in, and when she saw him she held up her hands and screamed.

She beheld her husband completely covered with those confounded cups.

"Why, mercy on me, what does this mean?" she asked, rushing towards him.

"The doctors cupped him for the rheumatism," said Shorty.

"They cupped me for a joke. Clear out, every one of you but Angie," he howled.

"Yes, go away, you horrid creatures," said his wife—and they laughingly withdrew.

She at once proceeded to untie her husband and remove the cups from his body, where they left savage looking red rings, but in spite of the racket that had been played upon him, he found that his rheumatism had been cured.

But that was not enough to mollify his wrath. His back was sore, but it was up, and revenge was what he was after now.

CHAPTER VI.

The old man was on the warpath now and no mistake.

The "cupping" racket to which he had been subjected, though a job put up by Shorty and a couple of medical students, was more than his good nature could stand.

He forgot all about the joke of the shirts that he had played on Shorty and the Kid, and now he wanted revenge—he almost wanted blood.

But the little jokers had danced out before he had time to get after them, knowing about how mad he would be, and also about how long it would take for him to cool off.

"It is a shame!" protested his wife, who was also his granddaughter by marriage.

"Shame! Why, confound those two runts, they are always putting up some job on me," he roared, as he walked back and forth in his room.

"But do you suppose it is possible that they have found out about the joke you played on them?"

"What joker?" he asked, suddenly stopping, all the while looking as black as a thunder cloud.

"Why, the marking of their shirts."

The old fellow made no reply for a moment, but gradually the memory of the racket he had played upon Shorty and the Kid came over him like a gleam of sunshine, and melted the ice in his good old heart.

His wife saw this, and a smile was on her face as their eyes met.

He laughed a little, too, but he said:

"Well, that was only to pay the rascals for the trick they played me with my boots."

"Very true; but it seems to be give and take with all three of you, and just now they appear to be one ahead," and she laughed merrily as she said it.

"But this one was a confounded sight rougher than mine was on them."

"So it is, and I could pull their ears for it."

"The rascally runts."

"But if you intend to keep the thing up, why you have got to play back some joke on them. If not, you can afford to drop it and allow them to have the satisfaction of being one ahead of you."

"No, I'll be hanged if I do," said he, resolutely.

"So it seems you are just as bad as they are, only they happen to be one ahead of you," said she, again laughing.

"Well, never mind. It will do no good to rest and let them be one ahead of me."

"How so?"

"Because they would not keep quiet a week before they went for me again."

"Is that so?"

"To be sure it is. Why, if they could not play a

trick now and then on somebody, I think they would die of the blues."

"They are a lively pair of boys, but as near as I can find out, they are both chips of the old block, eh?"

"Well, I like a joke now and then as well as anybody, but—"

"You don't like to have them played on you; is that it?"

"For that matter, I get them played on me whether I like them or not. Why, while we were making the trip around the world, they were continually playing some trick or other, either on me or my Chinese valet."

"I have heard about some of them," she said, laughing.

"But that isn't the worst of it; the report of the whole journey was published in THE BOYS OF NEW YORK, by Peter Pad, and the whole public laughed at me."

"Well, if they did, they also laughed at the tricks you played on them."

The old man was silent, for he couldn't remember many such tricks, the majority being worked at his own or Ho Sham's expense.

And yet he smiled faintly.

"Now, if I were in your place, I would take no notice of this racket, as they call it, but just set yourself to work to study up some way whereby you can get square with them."

This sort of flattered the old man, to think that his young wife should credit him with smartness enough to get even with these constitutional and confirmed jokers, and so he just kept on feeling good until that faint smile broke into a good-natured grin.

"Don't you think so, pop?" she asked, after watching him for a moment or two.

"Confound 'em, I've a great mind to try it! It would serve them right," said he, half musingly.

"So it would; but here is another thing," and she placed her hand lovingly on his arm.

"What is it, sweetness?"

"You have really got the laugh on them just as the matter stands."

"How so?"

"Why, this treatment of cupping was just exactly what you wanted."

"What?"

"Exactly."

"The deuce it was!" said he, starting back and looking at her in amazement.

"I can show it to you."

"Well, do, please," and he manifested some impatience at the idea.

"You had the rheumatism?"

"Yes."

"Bad?"

"Darnation bad."

"Very well, you haven't it now, have you?"

The old man felt himself over and walked about the room; for the fact was, he had been so mad ever since that he had forgotten all about his rheumatism.

"Well?"

"Upon my word, Angie, I do believe that it has cured me," said he, finally.

"That's it."

"Yes, it is all gone."

"Well, don't you see that you are the gainer, after all, and that in reality you have got the laugh on them?"

"That's so, Angie."

"Of course it is. So all you have to do to turn the laugh on them completely is to pretend that you are much obliged to them for the treatment, and assure them that your rheumatism is completely cured."

"Yes, that will make them sick."

"Of course it will."

"But it was a trick all the same, confound them," said he, clenching his fist.

"True, but it will rob them of all their merriment when you tell them how much obliged you are, and that you are cured."

"Yes, but I'll be hanged if I don't play something on them to pay off the score."

"Well, do as you like, but if I were you I would be content with turning the laugh."

"Yes, but that would not keep them from playing other tricks on me."

"And I doubt if it would were you to get even with them by another trick which you might play on them."

"Perhaps not, Angie; but it would be some satisfaction to me."

"Very well; if that is the way you feel, why, go ahead," said she, laughing.

Meantime, Shorty and the Kid had gone out for a drive, laughing and talking over the racket.

"Guess we'd better dine out," said Shorty.

"Why?" asked the Kid.

"The old rooster'll murder us if we go back to the house before he gets cooled off."

"Oh, it won't take him long."

"I don't believe it. Ther snap was too hot for him ter cool off very quick."

"Well, soy, he'll get cooled down to his jaw, won't he?"

"How be?"

"Why, der fight'll be cooled out of him, an' nothin' but his jaw left—savvy?"

"Maybe," mused Shorty.

"Why, cert, an' we can have some fun wid him. See?"

"All right; we'll try it on. Ah! here comes Charley Backus with that fast nag of his. Now he thinks he can scoop anything on the road. We'll see," he added, quietly.

Yes, along came the famous end man, behind his bay gelding, one of the fastest on the road, looking for "brushes." He recognized Shorty and his splendid

horse, *Banjo*, and so pulled up as he approached from behind, Shorty's horse having been walking some time while he and the Kid were talking over the racket.

They had only left the Park a few rods behind, and were now on the beautiful drive of Seventh avenue, leading to McComb's Dam.

"Hello, Shortness," cried Backus.

"Hello, Ham, how yer was?"

"Feeling silky; how's yerself?"

"Bang up, an' downy."

"Where did yer buy it?"

"Der nag?"

"Yes, old car horse?"

"Cert; got no go in him, but he's safe," replied Shorty, laughing.

"Safe for what?"

"Ter bet on."

"How, that he'll go a mile an hour?"

"That he can give dust."

"To what, a cow?"

"Yes, and ter you."

"I suppose so, if my horse stops or lays down."

"Yes, an' if he's puttin' in his best licks."

"An' your licks too," added the Kid.

"Whoop!" and Charley laughed heartily, and rattled his road wagon with his shaking fatness.

"Soy, Charley, brush yer from here ter ther bridge for a bot," said Shorty.

"First one there, or last one?"

"First."

"Do you mean it, Shorty?"

"Yes, or I'll make it two bots."

"All right, but I'll do better."

"How?"

"I'll give you one block the start."

"No, yer won't."

"Why?"

"Don't want it. If my nag can't beat that crow of yours, I'll swap him for a sheep."

"All right, come on!" exclaimed Backus, touching up his horse.

"I'm with yer, ole man."

"But you won't be long."

"No, I don't 'spect I will," replied Shorty, speaking to his horse.

Away they went up the avenue like a pair of racers, and it was a very even thing for about a mile, but shortly after they had crossed One Hundred and Twenty-fifth street, Shorty drew ahead, and he continued to widen the gap between them until Backus was left far behind, being finally beaten by a quarter of a mile at the bridge.

The two bottles of wine and the laugh was clearly on the fat minstrel, but he saw that Shorty's horse was too much for him, and did not attempt another brush with him, but set up the wine at Judge Smith's famous road-house, where they stopped.

This was fun, of course, just such as both Shorty and the Kid enjoyed, although since their marriage they generally went out with their wives, who enjoyed it quite as much as they did, and it soon became known that it took fast horses to give them dust.

Well, they returned home that evening to dinner, and the whole family met at the table; but instead of looking like an Indian on the war-path, they were greatly surprised to find the old man smiling, and as amiable as a lamb.

It was true enough, the laugh was clearly turned upon them when the old fellow proceeded to thank them for what they had done, assuring them that his rheumatism was all gone, and that he never felt better in all his life.

But, of course, the only way they could get out of it was to say that the thing had only worked just as they had intended that it should, and that they knew all the while that cupping was the very thing he stood in need of to cure his rheumatism.

Ginger Jones, as he waited upon the table, found the greatest difficulty in keeping on a smooth face, for he had taken part in the affair, and knew, of course, that it was a joke, and anything resembling one of those things always sent him off his feet, so ticklish was he.

Well, the dinner passed off pleasantly, and that evening the entire family went to the theater to see Lester Wallack play "My Awful Dad," a performance which they all enjoyed hugely.

But all the while the old man was trying to think up some joke that he could play on his boys, for although harmony was restored and everything was lovely again, he could not give up the idea of getting square with them.

It took him longer, however, to arrive at a point in such things than it did Shorty and the Kid, and finally he took Ginger Jones into his confidence, to see if he had any notions and could help him in the business.

But Shorty spotted him, and tumbled right away that the old man was trying to work a snap on them, so he began to hedge, and his first idea was to make the moak sick.

He and the Kid compared notes, and so went to work.

This was what he contrived:

Going to one of the spare chambers up-stairs, he took a sheet, and after cutting a round hole in it, about a foot in diameter, he hung it up in one corner of the room, so that it reached just to the floor.

Behind this he arranged a rope, which was attached to a hook in the wall, so that it hung right down in front of the hole in the sheet.

To the lower end of the rope he made a noose, and then placing a chair behind the sheet so that he could sit in it, he found that he could quietly sit in it with the noose around his neck, presenting his face to the opening, where he could make it look as though he had hung himself.

But, of course, the Kid had to stand in with him in order to work the racket all right, and when all was arranged, Shorty took his position behind the sheet

with the rope around his neck, while the Kid went in search of Ginger Jones, on whom they proposed to work.

"Soy, Ginge, where's my pop?" he asked.

"Which pop yer mean, Marsa Chawles?" asked Ginger, grinning all over himself.

"Why, my dad—Shorty. Have yer seen him?"

"Lots er times."

"No, no, have yer seen him ter-day?"

"No, sah, not since breakfast."

"We can't find him anywhere. He was feeling very bad when I saw him last, and yer know what a desperate cuss he is."

"Wal, sah, he am desperately funny, sah; I know dat to my sorrow, sah."

"Yes, but when he gets the blues he is just as desperate in other ways; and, between you an' I, Ginge (now don't let this go any further), he isn't quite so happy with his wife as he ought ter be; an' do yer know, I'm afraid he'll make away with himself some of these times?" said he, in a stage whisper.

"Good golly!" exclaimed Ginger, looking wild.

"Hush! Don't breathe a word! This must not be known outside of the fam. He had 'em on him this morning. Now, you go quietly all over the house an' see if yer can find him, an' if yer do, get off some of yer jokes ter kind of cheer him up, for he loves yer, Ginge."

"Now yer don't go fo' ter tell me dat—"

"Hush! he is somewhere about the house, I think. Go and find him," said the Kid, leaving him with a look of great concern.

"By gosh!" mused Ginger, after being left alone. "I hearn tell dat dar war a skeleton in ebery man's house, but, fo' de Lord, who would look fo' ole Bones in a house like dis yer?" and he glanced nervously around as though he expected to see a grinning skeleton spring out from some dark corner and dance a rattling break-down.

But overcoming his fears, he started for the upper part of the house to look it over for the purpose of finding Shorty and making him feel better with one of his jokes, never stopping to think how absurd the idea was of such a fellow's getting blue and contemplating suicide. But he was a very gullible darkey, anyway, and just the subject for the jokers to play their tricks upon.

However, the Kid had made him believe that he was a very funny coon, and that he had a great influence over Shorty, so with this idea in his head he began to look into the unoccupied rooms in search of him, once making a mistake and getting into the sky parlor occupied by one of the servant girls, and getting a pitcher of cold water thrown over him for his presumption.

But he finally came to the last room, a chamber at the rear of the house which was unoccupied, and he opened the door.

Shorty was in position, looking for all the world as though he was hung, at sight of which, Ginger's wool anklined and stood on end like a mad cat's.

Falling upon his knees, the trembling coon presented a most abject and forlorn picture.

His teeth were chattering like a hash mill, and he shook like a rooster's tail in the wind.

If ever there was a frightened coon, Ginger Jones was one. Indeed, as he knelt there before the horrid spectacle of his suicidal master, he was so utterly overpowered that he could not work his tongue at all.

Shorty had all he could do to keep a "horrid" face on himself, and once or twice thought he should be obliged to laugh.

Finally, Ginger recovered himself somewhat, and struggled to his feet. Then rushing to the door he made for down-stairs, yelling bloody murder at the top of his voice, but nearly breaking his neck as he missed his step and tumbled head over heels down the stairs, creating a deuce of a racket and alarming the whole house.

No sooner had he left the room, however, than Shorty took the rope from his neck, and from the book, and tearing down the sheet, he took everything with him down the back stairs, throwing the rope and sheet into a closet on the floor below, and finally reaching the dining-room unobserved, where he took up a paper and began to read just as though nothing had happened.

"Murder, murder!" shouted Ginger, as he picked himself up, and nearly tumbled down the next flight of stairs.

"What is it?" demanded all of the wives, rushing out of their chambers.

"What is it?" demanded the servants.

"What is it?" called the old man and the Kid.

"Oh, Lord! oh, Lord! Marsa Shorty hab hung himself," cried Ginger, and then the Kid knew that the snap had worked.

"Hung himself?"

"Impossible!" said they all.

"Where?"

"Up-stairs in de back chamber; oh, Lord!"

"Mercy, mercy!" and Shorty's wife fainted, while the old man seemed actually stunned.

"He hab hung heself, an' am lookin' out ob a hole!" cried Ginger, still trembling and looking like a black ghost.

"Oh, show us where?" and Ginger led the way back to the fatal chamber, closely followed by the old man and the Kid, greatly excited.

But of course when they reached the room, there was nothing to be found.

"Where is he?" they all demanded, as wives, brothers, fathers, and servants followed in.

Ginger looked wonderingly around and into the various corners of the room; there was no sign of any suicide, and he was paralyzed.

"What do you mean?" asked the old man.

"What yer given us?" protested the Kid.

"What's ther racket?" asked Shorty, who had followed them all up to the room.

"Wal, yul bahl!" exclaimed Ginger, gazing at Shorty as though he had been a ghost, and then, utterly overcome, he tumbled all in a heap upon the floor.

CHAPTER VII.

GINGER JONES was a crushed and frightened coon.

There he lay upon the floor, yelling and groaning, and trying to banish the vision of Shorty, whom he verily believed to be a ghost, from sight.

The trick that Shorty had played upon him did not seem like a trick to him, for he would have sworn on a Bible bigger than he was himself that he had seen Shorty hung, and now he returned to the room, followed by the frightened household, whom he had alarmed, but not only to find no signs of Shorty's "stiff," but actually to encounter Shorty alive and well.

He was speechless and paralyzed.

"What's ther row?" demanded Shorty.

"Oh, Lord!" groaned Ginger.

"What's the matter with you? Get up and tell us what ails yer."

"Oh, Lord! Amn't you hung?" he asked.

"Well, rather," replied Shorty, smiling.

"Amn't you a ghost?"

"Not a very airy one. Why?"

"I—I seed yer, ober dare," he said, pointing tremblingly to the corner where he felt certain that he had seen Shorty hanging and strangled out of all resemblance to himself.

"Seen who?"

"Seed you hangin', sah?"

"Git out! What sort of a crank have yer got hitched ter yerself? What's der matter?"

"Oh, sah, I've all broken up," sighed Ginger.

"Well, I should say so. What have yer been drinkin'?"

"Nuffin', sah."

"Don't give us that! Yer been catchin' on ter ther old man's brandy," said Shorty.

"No, sah, I neber drinks brandy."

"Well, then, you have been indulging in something else very heavily," said the old man.

"Sah, it am very queer."

"Yes, I think so."

"I would take my oaf dat I seen him."

"Who?"

"Massa George a-hangin' heself."

"Nonsense! You've got 'em," said Shorty—"got 'em bad. Now look a here, Ginge, you've got ter stop this, or else yer'll be huntin' for another postish. See?"

"Oh, sah, it am so queer," he protested.

"Yes, it does look a little that way, but go an let a hydrant run on yer head an' try ter brace up. See what a row yer've kicked up here in this house. An' yer told me that yer never drank anything but water."

"No, sah, I neber does."

"But how about this?"

"Sah, I don't understand it noways. Der Kid he say dat he couldn't find yer, an' tole me ter look about de house."

"Git out! Neber said nuffin'," put in the Kid, bracing up to him.

"Yer didn't?" exclaimed Ginger, starting back and looking at him in amazement.

"Cert not. I tell yer dat yer way off."

Ginger looked at him with open mouth.

"Ginge, it won't do," said Shorty.

"No, Ginge, you are a disgrace."

"Think what a scare you have given us," said the Kid's wife.

"He's no good at all, at all," put in the cook, who was one of the alarmed company.

"Don't let this occur again, sir."

"Better bounce him now."

"Think so?"

"Cert."

"Ginge, can you stand a bounce?" asked Shorty.

"Oh, golly, boss! please don't," said he, with a most piteful look.

"Bounce him!" cried the Kid.

"Oh, Massa Charles!"

"Git! Didn't yer soy I told yer ter go hunt for der ole man?"

"Wal, didn't yer?"

"What! Givin' it ter me agin?"

"Oh, Lord! Well, I fink so, boss."

"I presume you did, but you are away off," said the old man. "Better bounce him."

"Oh, Lord!"

"Yes, fire him!" said the Kid.

"Oh, Lord!" groaned the coon.

"If I don't, will yer shut down?" asked Shorty.

"How, boss?" he asked, tremblingly.

"Quit ther booze."

"Oh, boss!"

"Well?"

"I don't un'erstan' yer, boss."

"Turn off yer lush."

"Oh, boss! What's lush?"

"Why, yer tip."

"I arn't got no tip, sah."

"Yer juice."

"Juice?"

"Bug juice."

"What's dat?"

"Yer tangle."

"Oh, boss, yer tanglin' me up awful," said the poor perplexed coon.

"Will yer quit?"

"I'll do anything, boss."

"All right; stop drinkin'."

"Oh, boss! Please don't!"

"Don't what?"

"Think dat I drink."

"Well, yer get it down some way, but if I ever find you off so bad as this again I'll lift yer inter thet street. Savy?" asked Shorty.

"I've got no savy, sah."

"Well, do you understand what I have been tellin' yer?"

"Yes, sah."

"If you ever see anybody in this house hung again you will have to go. Do you get that into your black head?"

"Yes, sah."

"That settles it;" and the party started down-stairs, proceeded by the worst broken-up darkey that ever was seen.

It took some time to restore tranquillity in the house, the hurrah had created such a sensation, but finally it was understood that the whole thing had been a joke, and several good laughs were indulged in over it.

But it was no laughing matter for Ginger Jones. He knew very well that he had not been drinking anything, and why this apparition should meet him in the way it did was more than he could tell.

"Mus' be dat I've clean gone crazy," he mused.

"At all events, dar's somefin' bad de matter wid my nut, I spects. Took my dyin' oaf dat I seen dat Shorty hangin' stone dead up dar in dat room, an' I took my oaf dat de Kid tole me all 'bout how he was 'frail dat he was gwine to make a 'stiff' ob heself. But I guess I mus' be 'way off. Wonder what's de matter wid me, anyway? I've gwine right off ter see de doctor, anyway;" and clutching his head in his hands, he sank into a chair and took a long think.

But he could arrive at no other conclusion than that he was off his base, and so, after a long cogitation he started off to see a physician.

And who should he go to but Mr. Burwick's family doctor, and naturally enough he turned him over to one of his students, one of the same wags who had helped Shorty in carrying out the "cupping" racket, which had been played on the old man.

"Well, Mr. Jones, what seems to be the matter with you?" he asked.

"Doctor, dat yer am jus' what I's come ter find out," said Ginger, thoughtfully.

"What are your symptoms?"

"I habn't got none, sah."

"What! got no symptoms?"

"No, sah; neber had any. I's an orphan."

"No, no; you don't understand me. What is the trouble with you—how do you feel?"

"Now, boss, I don't scacely know. Shorty, he say dat I's got 'em."

"Got them! what?"

"De jama."

"Door jamba."

"No, sah, jim jama," replied Ginger, smiling in a sickly sort of a way, as though half way inclined to believe it himself.

"What! *Delirium tremens*?" asked the student, starting up in well-acted wonder.

"Yes, sah."

"Are you a lusher?"

"No, sah, I's a waiter."

"Do you booze?"

"No, sah; neber 'bused anybody in my life," replied Ginger, honestly.

"Do you make it a practice to nip the budge?"

"I—I don't understan' you, sah."

"Do you bend your elbow?"

"Sometimes, sah."

"Ahl you do, hey?"

"Guess eberybody bends dar elbow, sah."

"No; but what I wish to arrive at in order to make a correct diagnosis of your case, is whether in your meanderings about the city, in or out of the society of your kind; whether in public or in the privacy of your own chamber, you are given to the deleterious practice of 'hoisting'."

Ginger opened his eyes as the young doctor rattled this off so earnestly, and seemed to be taken completely aback.

"Be good enough to answer my interrogatory without any mental hesitation, reservation, or equivocation."

"N—no, sah, I—I neber had no bad practices like dat, sah, neber," said he, after recovering his breath somewhat.

"You never 'hoist'?"

"No, sah, neber."

"Well, are you at all given to quaffing the 'rosy'?" he asked, continuing the guy.

"No, sah," he replied, without knowing what he meant.

"Neither openly or sub rosa?"

"No, sah; neber quaff nuffin'."

"Do you not sometimes illuminate your pathway through life with effervescent nepenthe?"

"No, sah, neber."

"Are you in any sense a bacchanalian?"

"No, sah; I's a civilian."

"Well, sir, do you drink spirituous liquors?"

"No, sah; only once in a while I takes a little gin an' sugar."

"Indeed?"

"Yes, sah, but I don't make no practice ob it; I'm very keeful."

"How, to get enough?"

"Yes, sah."

"Let me see your tongue."

"Out came about a pound of it."

"Do you wear a liver pad?"

"No, sah."

"Ever subject to gum boils?"

"No, sah."

"Corns trouble you during an east wind?"

"Neber had no corns, sah."

"How is the speculum relatus of your moleculum diaphragm?"

"Don't know, sah."

"Let me see your tongue. Ah! I see evidences of Miculaa, evidences of coagulated strabismus." Ginger drew in that tongue of his and started as though he had been kicked.

"Are your cuticular pores generally open?"

"I—I don't know, sah," he replied, hesitatingly.

"Well, what is the matter with you, anyway?"

Ginger related the story, as the reader knows it, of how he saw or imagined he saw Shorty hung, when it turned out not to be so, and the young wag of a doctor knew at once that the coo had been made a victim of one of Shorty's jokes.

"Ah!" he exclaimed suddenly, "let me see your tongue!"

Out came Ginger's big tongue for the third time, and to make the guying all the more serious, he held a

"Can it be cured, doctor?"

"Oh, yes, I guess so. I will give you a prescription that will fix you all right. But you must stop playing policy and drinking gin, as well as all other bad habits," and he proceeded to write him out a recipe in Latin names, but which amounted to but little more than a bottle of liquorice water with a dash of peppermint in it, and which he directed to a friend of his who was a clerk in a drug-store.

"How much will it be?" asked Ginger, pulling out his pocket-book.

"Mr. Jones, I shall not charge you anything for attending to this case, for it is such a new one to me. You see, I am studying medicine and want opportunities to practice. I shall want to experiment on you

drawers of Shorty's dressing bureau where they would be confined until he chanced to pull it out, when the rodents would undoubtedly make it lively for him.

The more he thought of this racket the more he was in love with it, and finally he told his wife about it.

She regarded it as huge, and this so tickled him that he at once set about carrying out his grand rat racket. After some inquiries he found a man on Water street who dealt in rats, or at least he dealt in death for them, and with him he made an agreement to furnish two dozen live rats, which he was to bring to him on a certain day, inclosed in a bag.

And then the old man rubbed his hands in glee. At last he was sure of working a racket on Shorty at least that would pay him off for some that he had played on him.



Shorty and the Kid came in soon afterwards and beheld a sight at which they could not help laughing, and while they were doing so, Angelina, the old man's wife, came in, and when she saw him she held up her hands and screamed.

large magnifying glass over it that made it look as big as a beef's liver.

"Keep it out! I must get at the roots of this business," he said, when Ginger began to manifest some impatience and to try to take in his talking machine.

"Don't touch de roots, sah," said he, pulling it in long enough to do so.

"Are you married or single?"

"Single, sah."

"Ever play policy?"

"Sometimes, sah."

"Very bad. You was never made for a financier, and should not dabble in speculations. You must also shut down on your gin. Drink nothing hereafter but aqua pura."

"How does it taste, sah?" he asked, anxiously, not knowing that aqua pura was simply water with a Latin name.

"Oh, very pleasant; you would scarcely distinguish it from water. You can get it at any first-class drug-store. Now, sir, I have to inform you that you are on the verge of a very bad way. You are threatened with an attack of the Mongolian Serotum," said he, impressively.

"Oh, Lord! oh, Lord?" moaned the darkey. "Am I dangerous?"

"Very. You see the massacular, going riptum-anctus of the piebaldery percentum has commenced to burn on the biceptular musculine, and the triangularity of the fungus procentum is liable to be molested and injuriously affected by the enlargement of the conglomerator, and this in turn would inflame the hydrostatic nerve to such a degree that insanity would undoubtedly ensue."

"Bress de Lord! I didn't know dat I war so bad as dat," moaned Ginger.

"It is a very dangerous case, and you should have consulted me before."

from time to time, and so will not charge you anything."

Ginger stood aghast with open eyes.

"And I may want to practice surgery on you occasionally. For instance, I would like very much to open your lungs and note the operation of them; but whatever I may do, be assured I shall charge you nothing for it."

"You—you is very kind, sah," Ginger finally managed to say, although when he took that prescription and left the doctor's office, he just made up his mind that he would never get a chance to cut him open and examine the workings of his lungs. No, he had rather die right out and out with the terrible things that he had been told that he was suffering with.

But he went and got that prescription put up, and the drug clerk guyed him still further by telling him how careful he must be in taking the medicine, after which he charged him a dollar for it, and he returned to the Shorty mansion feeling better.

But, of course, he got laughed at there, and the old man concluded that he would have nothing to do with him in the racket that he proposed to play on Shorty and the Kid, seeing what a sucker he had proven himself to be.

But he was bound to work it all the same, although what he should work or how he should work it was more than he could say now.

Still he kept at it, trying to study out some racket that would get him even with the mischievous runts who had played the cupping snap on him, and he put his mind to work with all its force.

Finally he got rats on the brain.

Rats!

Yes, he conceived of a way whereby he could make Shorty sick.

He would find a rat-catcher and buy about twenty rats of him. These rats he would place in one of the

He and his wife talked it over, and although she did not exactly like the arrangement because of the fright it would be likely to give her mother, yet her desire to get even with the little jokers was so strong that she at length concluded that she would consent to it.

Now, through a friend, Shorty found out about this intended joke, and he resolved to have a piece of it himself.

So he watched for that rat-catcher, and by a little artifice managed to get the old man out of the house at the time the man was to go there with the rats, for a five-dollar note fixed things, as it often does in other

And this was how it was. He fixed it up with the man to come to the house two hours before the time appointed with the old man, and to deliver the bag of rats to him, after which he was to return and bring a bag of potatoes that would resemble the other as much as possible.

The scheme worked admirably. The man brought the rats while the old man and his wife were away, and Shorty carefully placed them in one of the drawers of their dressing case, at the same time fixing the mouth of the bag in such a way that they could only get out after being placed in the drawer long enough to give him time to close it.

Then he and the Kid went up to the billiard-room to play a game or two and to talk over the probable result of the rat racket.

The old man in the meantime remembered that he had an appointment with the rat-catcher at a certain hour, and he was promptly on time, as was the man, carrying a bag of potatoes, as Shorty had ordered.

"Whist! it's all roight," said the man with a very mysterious look.

"How?"

"I've chloroformed livery wan av thim, an' they won't come ter thimselfes for ten minutes yet."

"All right," said the old man, and after giving him five dollars, he took the bag of potatoes and stole softly up into Shorty's chamber with it.

Here he found no one, and after placing the bag of supposed rats in the draw where he knew Shorty kept his cigars, he carefully opened the mouth of it and then hastily closed the drawer.

It was several hours before bed time, and the family passed them pleasantly as usual, the old man and his wife all the while aching and anxious for the fun to commence, as it was almost sure to after Shorty and his wife retired to their chamber.

And finally all hands retired, and both the old man and his wife, in order to appear wholly unconscious of all that might happen, at once got out of their

were put to the old man and his wife as they danced around to avoid the rats.

"Ah! rats!" cried the old man.

"Rats!" moaned Angie, his wife.

"Rats!"

"Oh! take them away; do, please."

"Send for a dog!"

"Send for a cat!"

"For ter cats."

"And a dozen rat traps."

"Call in a man with a club!"

"Soy, what for?" asked Shorty, who pretended not to tumble.

"Rats!" exclaimed the old man.

"Oh, shoot 'em!" cried his wife, and both she and he danced and yelled.

And yet that settled the business about the matter of the rats. There could be no mistake about it; there were real rats there, and not rats of the imagination, as Shorty had suggested.

"What can be the meaning of this?" asked Shorty's wife, pretending that she did not understand it.

"How should we know?" asked the old man, speaking for himself and wife.

Indeed, they knew all about it, but none of them appeared to be so anxious to seem to know anything about it as the old man did, for he felt so silly over the failure of his practical joke upon Shorty that he wanted to go and hide his bald head.

"Chip has killed them all," said the Kid's wife, returning to the room.

"See if there are no more in the drawer," suggested



If ever there was a frightened coon, Ginger Jones was one. Indeed, as he knelt there before the horrid spectacle of his suicidal master, he was so utterly overpowered that he could not work his tongue at all.

clothes and into their night-clothes without loss of time.

They waited and listened, for Shorty's room was next to theirs, and they sat around in this way for some time, until finally the old man thought that a cigar would help pass the time until the circus began.

So he went to a drawer in his bureau where he kept his choice Havanas, and pulled it open.

In an instant two dozen rats leaped out, some of them into his face and all over his person.

He yelled murder and fell over backwards, while his wife screamed and made a leap for the bed, on top of which she climbed, pulling her night-dress tightly around her and squealing as only a woman can squeal when she sees a rat or a mouse, while they themselves were running and squealing all over the room.

CHAPTER VIII.

As quickly as the old man could gather himself up and get upon his feet, he proceeded to bounce up into a chair and to join with his wife in yelling murder and calling for help, while the rats were running about the room and trying all sorts of ways to get out.

They were both paralyzed, and the only conclusion they could arrive at as they stood at bay, was that the old man had made a mistake, and instead of placing the bag of rats in Shorty's bureau draw, he had placed them in his own.

Shorty and the Kid, with their wives, were close at hand, being all-ready for the racket.

They rushed in when the cry was raised, and they were excusable for doing so.

"What's der row?"

"What is it?"

"Who's killed?"

"Who hit yer?" and other exclamatory questions

"Now, say, what's the matter?" cried Shorty, bracing back earnestly.

"Rats!" cried Angeline.

"Where?"

"See 'em!" said the old man.

"Where, I'm shoutin'?"

"All over the room."

"Yes, the drawers are full of 'em!"

"Whose drawers?"

"Oh, Lord! send for a terrier!"

"And for traps!"

"And for rat poison!"

"Well, say, what for?" demanded Shorty.

"Rats!"

"Run 'em out!"

"Now, say, you fellers have got 'em bad!"

"But the rats."

"Do yer see rats?"

"Certainly."

"Nix. No rats here."

"No rats!"

"Nary. What have you been drinking?"

"Nothing."

"Nothing stronger'n brandy?"

"I tell you, George, there's rats in this room. About fifty of them leaped out of that drawer there when I opened it, and they are all scattered over the room."

"Nonsense!" You chaps have been takin' too much of the ole stuff, and it's a wonder yer don't see alligators," and Shorty gave vent to a good round laugh.

Indeed, the rats by this time had all gotten out of the door, and there wasn't a smell of them left, which puzzled the old man greatly.

But while those in the secret of the snap were laughing and guying the victims, the rats were being made the victims of Shorty's little black and tan terrier, who killed the whole lot of them so quick that they probably never knew what brought them out.

Angeline, who had no notion of getting down from the bed until sure there were no more rats in the room.

The old man opened the drawer and looked carefully into it, but the rodents had all stepped out. Then his wife stepped down.

Without admitting that they knew about the matter, Shorty and the others laughed and rigged the old man for some time about his bag of rats, and then left him and his wife alone to talk over the result of this joke on Shorty.

But they had only a little to say about the matter.

The old man was the first to speak.

"Angie, do you feel pretty strong?"

"No; those dreadful rats frightened the strength all out of me. Why?"

"I want a strong, vigorous person for about ten minutes."

"What for?"

"To club me."

"Do you think you deserve it?" she said, laughingly.

"Well, I should say I did. Who would have believed me so stupid?"

"I suppose you was frustrated for fear some one would catch you at it, and placed the bag of rats in our own bureau instead of theirs."

"Yes, that must have been the way of it," mused the old joker, thoughtfully.

"Unless—"

"Unless what?"

"Unless Shorty found out about the joke and quietly removed him from his drawer and placed them in ours."

The old man started up with open eyes. It was barely possible that this was so, for Shorty was keen enough to catch on to almost anything. But even this solution of the mystery did not help him much.

If he had made the mistake in placing the rats, he

felt that he deserved to be laughed at and clubbed, and if Shorty had really played the game back on him, he also deserved to be laughed at, so he had no choice either way he might look at it.

At all events, he felt sick over it, and to make matters worse, his wife playfully suggested that he give up the business of practical joking, which suggestion nearly broke his heart, for there was nothing he would not admit quicker than that there was anybody who could play jokes better than he could.

The next morning the whole house was awakened by a musical racket down in the basement, and on going down there they found Shorty perched up on the back of a chair, playing a rattling jig upon his banjo, and Ginger Jones and the Irish cook footing it down upon the floor at a lively rate.

"Whoop'er up!" cried Shorty, bound to give them all they wanted, for both of the servants made great pretensions to dancing.

"Go in, Ginge!" yelled the Kid.

"Go it, Biddy!" put in the old man.

"Whoop!" cried the girl, flinging her big feet over the floor at a loud rate. "Come on, ye nager!"

"Go in dar, honey! I'se gwane fo' yer!" cried Ginge, crazy with delight.

"Come on!"

"See me, chile, see me! Isn't I comin'?"

"Whoop! Sure nager dancin's no good at all, at all. Luck at that now!"

Soon the entire household had assembled in the kitchen, and all thoughts of breakfast were apparently abandoned, for there wasn't one of them that didn't think more of fun than they did of eating any time.

Shorty's racket, however, was not only to see the servants dance, but to get them to fighting if possible, for they had always been boasting of what they could do at dancing, and so he kept playing away to see how long they would keep it up, and which one would weaken first.

The entire company was cheering them on, and they were doing their level best to keep up the jig, and tire each other out.

Biddy was doing an Irish jig, and Ginger was rattling away at a plantation breakdown, which really required more wind and muscle than the other one did, but it was fun to see the two styles of dancing to the same music.

But after dancing about fifteen minutes Ginger began to blow and show signs of weakening, while Biddy seemed as fresh as a new potato.

"Go it, Ginge!" cried Shorty.

"Don't weaken, ole man," urged the Kid, but Ginge made no reply.

He had no wind to spare for chin music, but he indulged in a big grin that looked a trifle sick, and rolled the whites of his eyes vaguely.

Shorty swapped winks with the others as he gradually quickened the time he was giving on his banjo. Biddy took heart, and went in stronger than ever, whooping in her anticipated triumph, and calling upon poor Ginger to step in lively and show his style.

But he only grinned in response, and did the best he could with what strength he had left.

"Go in, Ginge!"

"Get in some of yer fine work now?"

"Where are yez now?" demanded Biddy.

"Don't let her down yer, Ginge!" and other remarks of a more or less encouraging nature greeted him as he struggled with the dance.

But he was nearly winded, and after one or two more breaks, he broke up entirely, and sank exhausted into a chair.

A derisive cheer greeted him, while Biddy gave a triumphant whoop, and put down a few more steps for "ould Ireland," and then subsided.

"Where are yees now wid yer nager dancin'?" she asked, mockingly.

"Ginge has weakened."

"Ah! afore I'd give up ter a woman?"

"Whew! she am de wuss I eber seen," said Ginger, puffing with his exertion.

"How am I ther wuss?" demanded Biddy, instantly bristling up, ready for a fight.

"De wuss ter beat at dancin'," replied Ginger.

"Ah, maybe yees think yer can bate me at anything else?" she said, going nearer to him.

"No, fo' de Lord, you am de boss."

"Av what?"

"Ob eberything in de world" he replied, seeing that she was in just a good humor for ruction now that she had beaten him at dancing.

"Faix, it's best that ye soy it, or, begob, old blacken yer oye, so I wud."

Ginger made no reply, and at the suggestion of Shorty's wife, Biddy went about the neglected business of cooking the breakfast.

And so Shorty and the Kid were obliged to do without seeing a fight between them, although there could be no doubt but that Biddy was ready for it at any time.

At the breakfast table the conversation naturally turned upon rats, and such a laugh as was raised at the old man's expense was enough to make a man go to bed sick.

Indeed, after beating around the bush and chaffing him for quite a while, Shorty came plump out and gave the whole thing away.

"Never mind, father-in-law, I'll get good and even with you yet," replied the old man, after standing the laugh for a long time.

"Well, try a bag of cats next time, dad."

"No, buy a pack of mice," suggested the Kid, and so the laughing breakfast party broke up, some to employ themselves in one way and some in another during the day.

The old man, however, went out for a walk in Central Park, and began to club his brains again for a joke he could work on Shorty. The laugh must be

turned by some means, for he was becoming tired of it.

Shorty and the Kid both went out to drive with their wives as usual, and in the afternoon he visited one or two of his old haunts, where he met old professional friends.

One of these friends chanced to be Gus Williams, and they swapped yarns and chaffed each other as they usually did, although the subject of the muchly married Shorty family was the one that afforded Gus and the others the most amusement.

Gus is one of the greatest practical jokers in the world, and it would be a cold day when he was not prepared with something new.

On this occasion he took an india-rubber toad from his pocket and placed it upon the table. It was startlingly life-like, and Shorty was for an instant puzzled to make out the snap; whether Gus had really provided himself with a tame toad in order to frighten people, or whether it was simply an artificial one.

And to make the deception all the greater, Gus had a way of pressing his finger on the toad behind in such a way that he would hop as naturally as a live one would.

"Say, Gus, give me this toad?" said Shorty, after looking at it for a few moments.

"What do you want of it, Shortness? Goin' to work his hind legs into soup?" asked Gus.

"Nixy! Goin' ter work him inter a racket on ther ole man."

"What! working the old man yet?" asked Gus, laughing, and then Shorty told him about several of the snaps he had worked on the old fellow of late, and especially the rat racket.

Well, the result was that Shorty got possession of the "toad," and took it home with him.

The first thing he did was to show it to the Kid, after which he watched his opportunity, and placed the "animal" upon the kitchen table, and then skipped for cover to note the result.

Presently Biddy came along near the table, droning a song, as she always did when she felt good, and after awhile she discovered the toad.

"Howly mother av Moses!" she exclaimed, starting back in surprise. "Fut's that? Be jabbers, but it's a frog, so it is. Wonder did ther milkman scoop him up this mornin' when he was watherin' his milk at the brook? Out av that, ye baste ye! Shoo! What! yer won't go? Then, begorra, we'll sa about it," and, catching up the broom, she raised it and gave it a terrible whack, breaking several dishes and raising a deuce of a row, but not injuring the toad at all.

Then she held her breath and looked at the ruin she had wrought.

"Bad luck to me; fut have I done, onyhow? Where's that bloody cratur, onyhow? Sure, I'll bate ther belly out av him this toime, so I will," and she made another whack at the toad, this time nearly breaking the table with the blow.

But of course the india-rubber animal was not harmed in the least; and, seeing that she had not yet burst his crust, she kept on pounding it with the broom until it bounded off the table upon the floor, when she proceeded to jump upon it in a most savage and determined manner, bound to mash it or die in the attempt.

She didn't exactly perish in the attempt, but in jumping upon the india-rubber "baste," it somehow tripped her so that her heels flew up and she went sprawling upon the floor with a heavy thud, accompanied by a big swear.

Then she was mad and wanted blood.

"Beggorra, but only wait till I'd get the ax an' sa fut I'll do," said she, starting for the cellar, where that deadly weapon was kept.

While she was gone the Kid sprang out and secured the toad, and then flew to cover again just as she returned with the ax.

"Where are yees now, bad luck ter yer?" she asked, raising the ax and looking around. "Be me sowl, but I think he knew fut was comin' an' hopped out," and she looked all around for her intended victim.

"Faix, it's lucky for him that he got out, or I'd ha' chopped ther devil out av him."

Finally she concluded that the "baste" had made its escape, and so returned the ax to its place, after which she proceeded with her business.

Presently, however, Shorty and the Kid came into the room and asked her some ordinary question about something, when she began to tell them about her adventure with the frog, as she called it, and while she was doing so the Kid placed it on the table again.

"Why, there it is now!" exclaimed Shorty.

"Bad manners ter ther bloody baste. Whist! wait till yer same scald ther loife out av him," she exclaimed, rushing for the tea-kettle.

"That'll cook his goose, Biddy," said Shorty.

"Indade, but sa if it don't," and holding the kettle of boiling water over the toad, she poured a stream upon it, which, of course, did not even cause him to wink.

"Howly Moses!" she exclaimed, while Shorty and the Kid laughed heartily.

"Hot wather don't move him."

"Oh, those fellows enjoy scalding water," said Shorty.

"Did onybody iver see ther loikes av it? Hould yer hould a bit," and she ran for her dust pan and broom, intending to take the "crathur" up and throw him into the fire.

But when she returned, the toad was nowhere to be seen, having been transferred to Shorty's pocket, and after laughing a little at Biddy's confusion they withdrew and left her to figure it out alone.

Watching his opportunity, Shorty went up to the old man's chamber and placed the toad in his bed to see what the result would be, and then he and the Kid listened after he and Angie had retired to their chamber.

They waited for some time without hearing anything uncommon, but presently the gas was turned out and there was a moment's silence.

Then there was a wild whoop in the room, and they had no difficulty in overhearing it.

"Oh, oh, oh—murder," shouted Angie, who was the first to get into bed.

"What is it, my dear?" cried the old man.

"There's a snake in the bed," she screamed, tumbling out of it in no very graceful manner.

"A snake!" exclaimed he.

"Or a—a—a something dreadful. I—I put my foot on it, and it is cold; light a light, quick, or I shall faint."

"Wa—wa—" stammered he, as he flew around in search of a match, while his wife sat crouched upon the floor, crying murder and all sorts of things that tended to make matters lively all around.

"Oh, Angie, what is it?" moaned the old man, as he finally succeeded in making a light.

"Get something to kill it with—where is your pistol?"

"Here—here it is. Where is it?" asked he, seizing his revolver and rushing toward the bed.

"Shoot it, Josiah, shoot it!"

"Hush! You stand at the foot of the bed and pull the bed-clothes down carefully, while I draw a bead on the reptile," said he, tremblingly.

Angelina obeyed timidly, while the old man raised his revolver anxiously.

"Ah! there it is!" she exclaimed, as the clothes came down and exposed the toad.

"Ah!" and with that exclamation he fired a shot at it.

"Kill him! Fire again, Josiah, fire again!" and he did fire, not only another shot, but three more, putting holes into the bed, although he finally hit the supposed toad, and knocked it out of sight behind the bed.

All the while Angelina was shouting murder, and then Shorty and the Kid burst into the room, followed by their wives and the servants, who had been alarmed by the shooting.

The room was filled with smoke, and the greatest excitement prevailed on all sides. The old man was so excited that with a loaded pistol he was positively dangerous, for every now and then he would fire another shot, either at the bed or something else, and that naturally made things even livelier than they were.

"What is it—who's killed?" demanded Shorty.

"Mercy, mercy! What has happened?" asked the other females, as they gathered tremblingly around.

CHAPTER IX.

"Sor, what's der riot?" demanded the Kid, who with the others had rushed into the old man's room when the pistol firing began.

It will be remembered that Shorty placed that india-rubber toad of his between the sheets of the old man's bed, and that Angelina, his wife, had been nearly frightened out of her life by placing her foot upon it when she got into bed, and then calling to the old man to kill it, which he proceeded to do with his revolver after he had struck a light, and he was firing as they came in.

"Stop it!" cried Shorty. "Who yer tryin ter kill?"

"A toad was in our bed!" exclaimed Angelina.

"Toad stool?"

"No, a real toad."

"Where is he?"

"I have finished him," said the old man.

"Finished him! Pick his bones!" asked the Kid.

"Mercy, what a scare you have given us," said Shorty's wife, although she knew the racket.

"Yes, sir, a real live toad," said the old man.

"But where under heavens could he have come from?"

"Oh, yer didn't see no toad."

"No, it was a rat," put in the Kid.

"Say, dad, yer 've got ter haul off."

"What do you mean, sir?"

"Got ter stop yer booze," said Shorty. "First yer see rats, then yer see toads, Bimeby yer'll be seein' elephants. I tell yer yer 've got to stop histin' so much."

"Nonsense. I tell you there was a toad in this bed, and if you look over behind there you will find him, sure," the old man insisted.

"Bah!" exclaimed Shorty, but he pulled the bed out and took a look.

Presently he picked up the india-rubber toad.

"What der yer say?" he asked, holding it in his hand and looking from one to the other.

The old man and his wife drew near and cautiously took a look at the "monster."

"Is it dead?"

"Cert. Always was. Why?"

"Always was dead!" exclaimed both of the victims.

"Cert. Say, what's ther matter with yer chaps anyway?" demanded Shorty.

"Why, the toad."

"What toad?" they all asked.

"See that?" asked the old man.

"What?"

"That."

"Say, that's no toad."

"No toad!"

"Course not. Look at it," he said, handing it to Angelina.

"Ah! take the horrid thing away!" she screamed.

"Horrid! Why, toads 'er good ter eat."

"Mercy, mercy!"

"Course they are. See!" and he placed the head of the india-rubber toad in his mouth, causing Angie to go into hysterics almost, and the old man to start back in alarm.

The others laughed heartily, and then the victims began to open their eyes.

"What do you mean?" the old man finally demanded, greatly astonished.

"Why, toads is bully," chipped in the Kid.

"Are yer been gunnin' for this little toad?"

"Confound the reptile; he was in our bed."

"That's nothin'."

"Nothin'!"

"What are you all laughing at?" asked Angie, turning to the others.

"At the sell," said Shorty's wife.

"Sell!"

"Cert," and again they all laughed.

"India-rubber toad! ha! ha! ha!"

"What is that you say?" asked the old man.

"Look at it," said Shorty, handing it to him.

With some reluctance the old fellow received it in his hand, but the moment he did so he knew that he had been made the victim of one of Shorty's practical jokes, as did his wife.

And while the laugh was up the old man and his wife exchanged glances.

They both understood it, and they were both mad.

"Shorty, you ought to be murdered," said Angie.

"Let me at him!" cried the old man, making a dive for him with his revolver.

But Shorty lit out so nimbly that the irate old dad was nowhere, and the others soon followed, making the house resound with their laughter.

The visitors were left alone to themselves.

They looked at each other seriously for a moment, but finally Angie caught sight of the toad as it lay upon the floor, and burst out laughing.

But there wasn't a laugh in the old man to save his life. He wanted to fight.

Catching sight of the India-rubber reptile he jumped upon it. He gnashed his uppers and unders and then jumped upon it again. He hurt his best corn and then said naughty words real loud.

His wife tried to quiet him, tried to make him see it in the light of a joke, but he only said his cuss-words louder and leaped once more upon the innocent cause of all the trouble.

But this last leap was an unfortunate one, for he struck upon it in such a way as to trip him in some way, and down the old man sat upon the floor, jarring the whole house with the concussion.

His wife assisted him to his feet.

"Why, how foolish, Josiah," said she.

"Foolish!" and he had to grab his tongue in order to keep respectable.

"Certainly. What spite have you to vent upon that harmless toy? What harm can you do it, anyway?"

"Oh, I would like to—"

"Now, never mind. The thing is a clever sell, but the more you resent it the more they will have to laugh at."

"Oh, oh, oh!" he cried, wild with rage.

"The best way to turn the thing is to join in the laugh, and acknowledge the sell to be one of the best you ever knew."

"But—why, only think of it!" he exclaimed, scarcely able to contain himself.

"I see. And it was as much on me as on you."

"But to—actually think it was a live toad!"

"Yes, but it looks very life-like."

"And to think that I should shoot at it!"

"Angie couldn't help laughing at that."

"Actually fired at it with my revolver!"

"Yes."

"And put six or seven bullets into our bed."

"Yes."

"While you held the blankets."

"Yes, fully believing it was a real toad."

"Oh, it is too much!" groaned he.

"Too much what—toad or sell?"

"A trifle too much of both. What ought I to do with that fellow?"

"Help him out with his laugh, and smother it by admitting that it was the best practical joke that ever you knew of."

"What! admit that?" he exclaimed.

"To be sure; always admit the truth."

"And allow them to laugh at us!"

"The laugh will not last long if we join in it, depend upon that."

"Oh, that scoundrelly runt!"

"But it was a good joke, nevertheless."

"What! do you join in with him?"

"No, only if we laugh at the thing it will die out much sooner than it would if we were to resent it."

"Oh, confound him!" growled the old man, and turning out the light he jumped into bed, while Shorty and the others were laughing over the racket downstairs.

"Say, Ginger, fut's ther laugh all about above stairs?" asked Biddy, as the colored waiter went into the kitchen to get a bottle of wine out of the refrigerator.

"Oh, by golly! de bess you eber hearn tell ob," said he, throwing up the top of his head and laughing.

"But who fired ther guns?"

"Oh, by golly! Who! who! whoop! Dat war de bes racket eber I heard ob."

"Bad manners to yees, fut war it anyway? Give me some av that laugh, yer nager."

"Wal, I say, Biddy, did you eber see a toad?"

"Murder an' nouns—fut's that yer soy?" she exclaimed, starting towards him in an angry mood; it will be remembered that she had been a victim to that same toad, and her first impression was that Ginger was on the point of making fun of her.

"Toad!"

"Fut about a toad onyway?" she demanded, standing up before him with her big arms akimbo.

"A Ingy-rubber toad," said he, softly.

"Wal, mister nager, fut about yer Ingy-rubber toad?" she asked, with her face close to his and in a very beligerent mood generally.

"I war gwine ter tell yer. Did yer see dat toad?"

"Bad luck to yer! Do yer think because ther boss can play a joke on me that you can, you black black-guard! Take that!" and she gave poor Ginger a paste on the nose that staggered him.

But he didn't wait to argue the question or to resent her pugnacity. He simply pulled himself together and darted out of the kitchen, leaving Biddy the boss beyond a doubt, although he couldn't for the life of him make out what the matter was with her.

The next morning when the family met at breakfast, the old man had partially recovered from his fever of anger, and, following the advice and example of his wife, he joined in the general laugh and admitted that the sell was a good one.

But it didn't make him feel any better after all, and secretly he made up his mind to play a trick off on Shorty that would make him so sick that he would throw up his hands.

So once more he brought his intellect to bear upon the subject of getting square with the little joker he had tried it on so often.

But somehow or other he couldn't seem to catch on to anything big. He thought of several things, but couldn't carry them out.

One thing, however, he did work.

Both Shorty and the Kid had nobby umbrellas, which they danced out with whenever there was a cloud in the sky as big as a circus-tent.

The old man went for those umbrellas. He doctored them both in the same way.

The result was that the next time Shorty and the Kid went out for a walk, as they did nearly every day, they took along their silk awnings because it looked as though it might rain.

And before they had gone far it did rain.

"Guess I'll have to wet my tent," said Shorty, preparing to open his umbrella.

"Guess I'll skin mine," mused the Kid, stripping off the cover.

They opened them at the same time.

But in doing so they both pulled the handles through in such a way as to reverse the shape of their umbrellas completely.

"What!" they exclaimed together, and then they looked at each other.

It was a comical picture.

But in the meantime they were getting wet.

"Say!"

"You say."

"Dad."

"Dad."

"Racket."

"Yes, der ole man's got in on us after a long time, hasn't he?"

"Got in on our tents I should say."

"Guess dat was der intent."

"Good for ther ole man!"

"Bully for der ole man, but rough on our new umbrellas," said the Kid, darting into a friendly doorway out of the rain.

"I'll fix it."

"How?"

"We'll go and buy two more just like these an' never say a word about this racket."

"Good lick!"

"An' he'll be dead fooled."

"Cert."

"But we've got ter look out for ther ole rooster, for he's gettin' coltish since he got married," and laughing they went to the same store where they had bought the umbrellas.

They could not find two more exactly like their old ones, but Shorty's ingenuity came to the rescue as usual, and in order to make them look exactly like the old ones, he had the old handles put on the new umbrellas.

The old man and Angie were sitting in the parlor near the windows, so as to see them when they returned, for the rain kept coming down, and they knew that the joke must have worked before this time.

But when the little jokers returned with perfect umbrellas, and to all appearances the very same ones they had started out with, the old man's jaw went down, and he began to think that it was impossible for him to get in on those two fellows anyway.

As usual, he felt sick, and when his wife asked him where the laugh came in, he wished he had never been married.

But still he was bound to get even or perish in the attempt.

One evening, not long afterwards, they all started to go down town a short distance to witness a billiard match between two celebrated experts, and at an agreed upon point Shorty and the Kid let the old man get a few yards ahead of them, and then suddenly dodged into a saloon out of sight.

Just then a policeman collared the old man, the job having been put up by Shorty the day before.

"Here, I want you," said he, nearly yanking the old fellow out of his coat.

"What!" exclaimed he, aghast.

"I want you. Come along or I'll club the whole head off yer!"

"What's the matter with you?" and the old man began to show fight.

"Oh, I'll show you what's the matter with me, and then somebody'll want ter know what ther matter is with you," said the officer, drawing his club.

"Don't you dare to strike me, sir, don't you dare to lift your unholy stick against my person!"

"What! this is no holy stick; it's a locust."

"Well, whatever it is, don't you dare to raise it against me or I will have you broken."

"What! Dead men tell no tales."

"Release me, sir, instantly."

"I murmur, no. Come along."

"Never! What means this outrage?" he loudly demanded, and by this time there was a large and excited crowd around them.

"Come along!"

"No, sir; I refuse."

"All right," and he gave the old fellow a belt with his club, squarely on the fattest portion of his body.

"Murder!"

"Come along, I saw you pick that man's pocket."

"You lie, sir, I am an honest man. I never picked a pocket in my life."

"Too thin, old man. Come along or I shall warm the place you sit down on," and with superior strength he dragged the old fellow along towards the station-house, he all the while protesting against the outrage.

But they had gone only a short distance when Shorty and the Kid caught up with them.

"Hello, Bob, what yer got there?" asked Shorty.

"A tough old cuss, Shorty."

"Ah, there are my sons!" exclaimed the old man. "Do you know this ruffian, Shorty?" cried the old man.

"Hello, why yer've got my dad?" cried Shorty, pretending to be surprised.

"What?"

"My ole dad."

"Nonsense! What are yer givin' me, Shorty?"

"Fact, Bob."

"Of course it is a fact, you scoundrel, and if you don't instantly release me, you will find your days on the police force are numbered."

"What's ther racket, anyhow?"

"Nothing at all. I was walking peaceably along Broadway when this ruffian seized me and accused me of picking pockets."

"Is that so, Bob?" asked Shorty, seriously.

"Got the old rooster dead to rights. But I'm sorry he's your father, Shorty."

"So be it."

"What!" exclaimed the old man?

"Better take him in, Bob."

"Great heavens!"

"Serves yer right. Ther idea!"

"But I tell you—"

"An ole man like you wid a young wife an' a barrel of money pickin' pockets."

"Oh, it's awful!" chipped in the Kid.

"Yes, take him in."

"Thunder and blazes! what do you mean?"

"I mean to take you in, that's what I mean."

"But you know you did not see me pick anybody's pocket. I can prove my respectability, and you shall suffer for this, sir."

"Shut up!" and he raised his club.

"Don't you dare to strike me again."

"What!" and he gave him another smack.

"Give it to him, Bob. Serves him just right," said Shorty.

"Yes, don't take any of his sass or ugly," put in the Kid.

This paralyzed the old fellow completely.

"Come along or I'll make a funeral of you."

"Shorty, what does this outrage mean?" he cried imploringly as he walked along.

"Give it up. You know best."

"No, I'll be hanged if I do."

"Don't talk to me; I shake yer!"

"Can it be possible?"

"Oh, shut up on that chin music," said the officer, giving him another yank.

The almost heart-broken old man said no more. He didn't know what to say, in fact. He could understand that the officer had made a mistake, but how it was that his sons should go back on him in this manner was more than he could understand.

Shorty and the Kid followed along with the usual crowd that accompanies any arrest, to the station house, but on arriving there they did not go in with the others.

The old man was taken before Sergeant Polly, who happened to be at the desk.

"Ah! you have caught him, have you, Bob?" he asked, as the victim was placed before him.

"Yes, got him up here on Broadway."

"This is infamous, sir!"

"Shut up, sir; give me your pedigree."

"No, sir, I'll see you hanged first."

"All right. Chuck him into a cell. I guess that will bring him to his milk," said the sergeant.

"If you do, I'll have you broken."

"But you may get your head broken first."

"I am an honest man, sir."

"That's what they all say."

"All! who?"

"Why, you light-fingered fellows."

"I tell you, sir, that there has been a mistake made."

"But the only mistake you made, old man, was in getting caught. Run him down-stairs," and in spite of his protests he was yanked down-stairs and locked into a cell.

Once there he bewailed his fate, and wondered what had become of Shorty and the Kid, and why they had deserted him.

Finally they came down-stairs and began to chaff him unmercifully; asking him what message he wished to send home to his wife, etc.

"Boys, this is an outrage," he protested.

"Almost as bad as spollin' umbrellas, eh?" said Shorty, at which the old fellow started.

"What do you mean—is this a joke?" he finally demanded.

"How do you like it so far?"

"It is an outrage."

"So's cuttin' umbrellas."

"Oh, get me out of this and I never will play another joke on you," said he, appealingly.

"Will you swear it?"

"Yes."

"An' own up to everything?"

"Yes. I—I marked your shirts, I—"

laughter of the boys and Sergeant Polly, who had joined them, drowned his further confession.

Promising to treat all hands and never say a word about the matter, he was finally set at liberty. But a more thoroughly sick and disgusted man was never seen.

No more practical joking for him! He had got all he wanted, but he did awfully want to get square with them.

CHAPTER X.

THAT arrest racket cured the old man of all the ambition he had to shine as a practical joker for the purpose of getting even with Shorty and the Kid for the snaps they played on him.

In fact, it was a family of jokers, and something was going on all the while. Indeed, as before stated, it was one of the jolliest and most comical families that ever existed.

The hot weather was over by this time and the fashionable amusement season was now opening in New York. Of course the family took in nearly everything, for their object in life was to amuse and be amused; consequently they were either going somewhere or doing something every night.

Sometimes they had Biddy and Ginger in a challenge dance, for which Shorty and the Kid furnished the music in their usual style, and which always furnished heaps of fun for them all, although Ginger was sure to get left every time.

Yes, she could always boss Ginger when it came to

"I—I don't want ter do dat, boss, fo' my life amn't insud," said he, rolling up the whites of his eyes.

The Kid laughed heartily.

"Soy, are yer playin' it on me?"

"No, sah, I neber played nuffin' on nobody."

"But how about Biddy?"

"Guess she am all right, sah," he replied, with a big grin.

"Dead gone, eh?"

"Dead an' gone!"

"Dead gone on you, eh?"

"How dat, sah?"

"Dead in love with you?"

"Oh, by golly!" exclaimed the moak, and he opened his mouth, while laughing, wide enough to take in a ton of coal.



Catching up the broom, she raised it and gave it a terrible whack, breaking several dishes and raising a deuce of a row; but not injuring the load at all.

His only anxiety was that the sell of his being placed in a cell at the station house should not reach his wife's ears, and the boys promised to say nothing about it, provided he treated liberally and cut no more jokes or umbrellas.

Oh, didn't he jump at the proposition!

Well, somewhat.

"I'm no hog," said he. "I know when I have got enough. You young rascals are too many for me, and so I put up my hands. Call all your friends and tell them to shout for all they want. I pay," he added.

"Soy, goin' ter fool any more wid our billed shirts?" asked the Kid.

"No."

"Goin' ter play any more rats on me?" asked Shorty.

"No, I weaken: I'm no good, only, for Heaven's sake, don't give this racket away at home. Promise me you won't!"

"Cert," they both said.

Then followed a "wash" of wine, in which all the parties to the snap took a hand, after which they continued their way to the scene of the billiard match.

Yes, the old man was sick. He took a long think, and then he took a tumble to himself. He had the disposition to play jokes on people, and with some he might have succeeded, but he always got the worst of it when he tried them on Shorty or the Kid.

Things moved along quite nicely at the splendid home of the Shortys, for a long time after that; the old man adhering to his promise not to attempt any more practical jokes.

But it will be borne in mind that Shorty's wife and her two daughters were not so very far behind in the matter of making fun and playing jokes, and now and then they got one on the lads that made them wince.

And occasionally they played something on the old man, and occasionally, also, they got a snap played

shaking legs, and he knew it, although he hated to acknowledge it.

And sometimes they gave parties to their old theatrical friends, which were sure to be ahead of anything given by anybody else in the city, and were consequently well attended by their many friends.

But after all they had the most fun at home with themselves, and if they lacked for a subject, they always went for Ginger Jones, who never failed to be a good one, although he was generally the victim.

For instance, the Kid told him one day that he must keep away from the kitchen.

"What fo'?" he asked, in surprise.

"Now dat's all right, Ginge. Don't give me any of yer guff," replied the little fellow, looking serious, even savage.

"I don't come fo' ter unerstan' yer, boss."

"Yer don't, eh? Yer don't know Biddy, I suppose? What 'er givin' us?"

"Ob cose I know Biddy."

"Well, hold up yer hands."

Ginger, who didn't understand the slang of holding up one's hands, thinking that he had received an order, promptly held up his hands.

"What'r yer doin'?"

"Yer told me ter hole up my hans, boss."

The Kid looked at him a moment, but Ginger was so honest that he saw nothing.

"Tumble?"

"How, boss?"

"Der yer tumble?"

"Sometimes, boss."

"Then tumble ter this."

This seemed like another order, and so the coon at once turned a flip-flap.

"Soy, what'er givin' us?" demanded the Kid, looking at him in genuine astonishment.

"Didn't yer tell me fo' ter tumble?"

"Oh, go shoot yerself!"

"Now, hold on, Ginge, none of that!"

"Wha dat?" he asked, half alarmed.

"No guff."

"I—I neber guffed nobody, sah."

"What have yer been doin' ter Biddy?" he asked, looking up savagely at him.

"Me! Me do ter Biddy?"

"Yes, give it ter me straight, now, or you'll get der grand bounce."

"I—I didn't do nuffin' to her, sah."

"Come, now, no nonsense."

"Neber, so help me!"

"Never give her any taff?"

"No, sah."

"Never made love to her?"

"No, sah, she'd kill me if I did."

"Oh, that's too thin. She's mashed on yer, Ginge, an' yer must have been workin' yer little tally racket down in ther kitchen."

"Neber worked nuffin' down dar, sah."

"Well, yer'd best keep away, for I hear dat she's dead gone on yer."

"Oh, by golly!" exclaimed Ginger, laughing.

"She says yer too bashful," continued the little guy, looking honest all the while.

"Bashful!"

"Cert. She says if yer'd ther spunk ter kiss her, she'd go crazy on yer. Now keep away, and let her alone. Understand?"

"Oh, yes, boss."

"All right, and see dat you do," replied the Kid, walking away, leaving Ginger in a sort of maze.

Biddy was rather a good-looking Irish girl, and had he dared, he would have made love to her a long time ago, but now that he had learned that she was in love with him, he resolved to show her that he was not half so bashful as she supposed.

Shorty and the Kid had talked the thing over, and

weighed it up, and from that they judged what the result would be.

Ginger Jones began to feel his oats.

"Yah, yah, yah! dat white gal clean gone on me, hey? Oh, I guess not! Who dat chap called me a coon? If I don't forget myself, I is de king-pin, I is. Biddy clean gone on me, hey? Oh, I make dat all right wid her. Bashful, am I?" and then he laughed loud and heartily to himself—a sort of a triumphant laugh—which sounded like the crow of a rooster who had vanquished a rival.

It will be remembered that Ginger was a sort of a boss about the place; that he was a sort of fancy waiter, who had more to say than any of the other servants, and on that account it is no wonder that he put on a few airs.

"Yes, took her off, boss, took her off," cried Ginger, the moment he recognized Shorty's voice.

"Bad luck ter the black spalpeen!"

"What has he been doing, Biddy?"

"Murder, fut has he!" said she, getting from astride the badly pummeled darkey. "Why, this black blackguard stole up behind me an' gave me a kiss," said she.

"An' yer kicked?" said Shorty.

"Begorra, an' I struck, so I did, bad luck ter ther black spalpeen."

"Get up, Ginge. What yer doin' down there on ther floor?" asked Shorty.

"I—I don't know, boss, I—I's kinder broken up, I is," said he, struggling hard to pull himself together and get upon his pins.

"Lave me at him?"

"No, no! Go about yer work."

"An' lave that blackguard go aisy!"

"Never mind; I'll fix that for yer," said Shorty, while Ginger pulled himself together and got out of that.

Like the old man, he was no hog. He knew very well when he had got enough, and he now acknowledged that Biddy was more than enough for him, either at dancing or fighting.

You may bet that Ginger Jones kept out of the kitchen domains for a while after that. Indeed, it was not until Shorty's wife had explained the whole matter to Biddy that he was safe from a welting at her hands, but after that peace was declared again.

However, the object was attained, that of creating a laugh, for they talked the matter over at the table



"Come along!" "No, sir; I refuse." "All right," and he gave the old fellow a belt with his club squarely on the fullest portion of his body.

But so far as Biddy was concerned, he made up his mind first to disabuse her mind of the idea that he was bashful, and then to give her such a dose of taffy as would settle her business.

That afternoon he fixed himself up in his finest. He worked billed shirt, collars, and cuffs, and the diamonds he displayed were only a little short of fabulous. In this guise he went down into the kitchen and dawned upon its queen, Biddy.

He shot one or two killing glances at her as he entered, just to let her know that he was there and appreciated her.

"Bad luck ter that mook," she mused, "he's fixed up mighty fine this noight. I wonder is there goin' ter be a party here?" and then she continued her work.

Ginger Jones was watching movements. "Oh, she thinks I'm bashful, does she?" and then he chuckled to himself.

Watching a favorable opportunity, he stole up behind her, caught her around the neck and gave her a rousing kiss.

Yes, it was a rousing one. It roused her.

Breaking away from him, she pulled her hands out of the dough she was mixing at the time, and turning, she gave him a smash in the nose that not only knocked him down, but covered him with flour and dough.

"Bad luck ter yer, ye nager!" she shouted. "Is that fut yer at? Did yer kiss me wid yer big thick lips? Whoop!" and before Ginger could get up and escape, she was on top of him with a rolling-pin.

Indeed, had his head belonged to anybody but one of his race, it surely would have been pounded into a jelly. He yelled murder, and both Shorty and the Kid responded, having both been on the watch for results.

The Kid, however, kept out of sight, but Shorty came to the front and shouted to know what the circus was all about.

"Get off, Biddy, get off."

"What's der row?"

"Oh, this black baste! Lave me at him again!" cried Biddy, dancing around.

"Don't do it! Don't leef her do it, boss, fo' I guess I's made a mistake!" cried Ginger.

"Wal, I should soy yer had. What yer down here foolin' wid Biddy for, hoy?" demanded Shorty indignantly.

"Now, boss, I—"

"Shut up, or I'll give yer some more," cried Biddy, facing him.

"Soft now, Biddy; did he kiss you?"

"He did, sor, an' I'll have to scrub me lips wid soda, so I will," she cried.

"Boss, it was all a mistake, I guess, but ther Kid tole me dat she was dead in lub wid me," said Ginger, wiping the blood from his nose.

"In love wid yees! In love wid a black nagur loike yees! Oh, murder!" and she threw her hands over her head wildly.

"Dat what de Kid say."

"Git out! ther Kid never said anything of the kind. Yer tryin' ter mash Biddy."

"Mash me!" exclaimed she. "Whoop!"

"Now, Ginge, look ahere; yer no good if this thing happens agin. I know yer litle racket, but it won't work; an' if I ever catch yer foolin' like this any more, yer'll get the gran' bounce. Yer hear me?"

"Oh, lave me at him!" cried Biddy, who was not half satisfied. "Give me lave to punch ther whole head off him, ther spalpeen!"

"No, no!" shouted Ginger, getting away and behind Shorty.

"Lave me at him!"

"Hush! Stop all this nonsense," said Shorty, getting between them.

"Ther black baste!"

"Ginge, yer'd better skin out."

"Lave me at him!"

"Hold on, I soy. What's ther matter?"

during several meals, the Kid explaining how he put up the job, and Shorty giving a comical description of how Biddy went for the amorous coon.

Ginger overheard the conversation, and yet he did not tumble. He was one of those fellows who never learn anything by experience, however rough it may be, and as soon as free from one joke played upon him he is a good subject for another.

But it was about this time that Shorty had completed arrangements for having private theatricals in the house. He had fitted up a stage in the back parlor with every convenience that a larger theater possesses, including three sets of scenes and a good stock of properties.

Well, by the aid of volunteer talent they had several fine entertainments there that attracted a house full of friends, and scarcely any event of a like nature happened that created so much talk in amateur circles as did these private entertainments.

Shorty and the Kid gave some of their specialties on each occasion, and the reader understands that part of the business well enough to know that what always made a hit in all countries and among all peoples, would be pretty sure to do the same thing in the midst of friends and acquaintances.

Well, finally the last one was announced; the close of the season, so to speak, and as a grand finale to the whole business, it was announced that the Shorty family—that is to say, the old man, the Kid, and the original Shorty—would appear in a special performance, and this was hailed with genuine delight.

Shorty and the Kid had some difficulty in getting the old man to consent to the arrangement, but having won Angelina, his wife, over to the idea, he finally, to please her, consented to appear as a prima donna in a little burlesque opera which Shorty had faked up for the occasion.

Now the old man was not such a slouch as you may think. He had a fine bass voice and knew how to use

it, and the idea of a prima donna singing in that voice struck Shorty as being exceedingly funny.

So they rehearsed the business together until perfect, and meantime Shorty was having a dress and wig made for him, together with an elaborate make-up, for the affair had produced so much talk among their friends that he was determined that nothing should prevent him from making a hit.

But it would not be Shorty if he did not also prepare for some fun with the old man, and during the day before the performance in the evening, he and the Kid arranged some strings at the wings for a special purpose.

The dress came home in the afternoon, and the family had considerable fun after dressing the old man up and showing him how to manage his trail, and do other things the same as women do them.

But it was enjoyable sport, and he went in for it with pleasure, never for one moment suspecting that there was a job put up for him, or that the dress was a trick one, such as are used in pantomimes.

Such, however, was the fact, and Ginger was instructed in the part he was to play with the strings they had arranged, and by night everything was in readiness.

The entertainment drew out a big house full of friends. It commenced with a farce, "a regular screamer," performed by a company of amateurs, splendidly done.

This was followed by songs by various volunteers, and a "Banjo Recital" by Shorty, after which there was a curtain, and music, by Mrs. Angelina Burwick on the piano, which, by the way, she was the mistress of; allowing time for the three Shortys to dress for the little burlesque opera, which was the next and last feature of the evening's entertainment.

Feeling certain that this would make a hit, Shorty had arranged with a few of his friends that it should be called for three times, and presently you will see what his object was.

Finally the curtain went up, and the three Shortys came upon the stage, being received with loud laughter and applause.

The old man's make-up was splendid, and many in the audience refused to believe at first that it was really he, or, indeed, a man at all, so completely was he changed.

Shorty was dressed as an Italian brigand, and the Kid as a captive prince, the old man personating the character of his mother, also a captive to the blood-thirsty brigands.

The singing was mostly a solo by the old man, and a trio chorus by all three: a sort of a concerted piece—a dialogue, set to music—and they performed it splendidly.

Indeed, the surprise was genuine, for none of their friends ever suspected how well they could sing together, but of course when they heard the old man's double bass, while dressed and taking the part of a female, they had to laugh, so ridiculous was it.

Of course it was demanded again, and even again.

But on going out the third time, Shorty quietly attached a fish-hook to the old man's wig, and another to a certain loop in his dress, arranged for a special purpose.

So they began their business over again, doing it seemingly better than ever, receiving hearty and genuine applause.

The old man had the last solo to do before the final trio which closed the scene, and he advanced to the front of the stage for the purpose of doing it.

CHAPTER XI.

You remember the situation at the close of the last chapter.

I shouldn't have broken it off the way I did, only the printer was howling in my ears for "more copy" and threatening to close up the page and go to press without me, and on that account I trust you will pardon me, boys.

The old man Burwick, as the prima donna, went to the front of the stage to give the final solo, and it was no slouch either.

But just as he finished it, Shorty motioned to Ginger Jones, who stood at the wing with the strings in his hand.

Quick as a flash the old man's wig and dress left him and flew up out of sight.

There he stood with nothing on but his underclothing, and the roar which went up from the audience confused him even more.

Indeed, he stood there perfectly dazed for half a minute before he found his senses, and then how he did skip out of sight!

But after he got out of sight it was another half a minute before he could speak, and the shouts of laughter in the parlor made it difficult for him to be heard.

Shorty and the Kid stood behind the wings, laughing as though they would split, while the top of Ginger Jones' head seemed in danger of falling off and over backwards.

The curtain was lowered and Angelina, the old man's wife rushed behind the scenes to learn the cause of the mischief, although she suspected that it was one of Shorty's tricks.

"What in thunder does this mean?" he was demanding, as she came upon the scene.

"Yes, that is what I would like to know," said Angie, while Shorty, the Kid, and Ginger kept up their laughter.

"Shorty, you scoundrel, this is some of your doings," roared the old man.

"Cheese it, pop; it was Ginger," said the Kid.

"Ginger! Did you do that, Ginger Jones?" he thundered, turning upon him like an enraged tiger, and frightening him almost to death.

"I—I—I," he stammered, while his knees smote together.

"Did you do it?" he yelled.

"Boss—I—Shorty—"

"Did he put you up to it?"

"Y—yes, boss."

"What!" screamed Shorty.

"Club him!" shouted the Kid, and they all three of them went for that poor nigger and nearly knocked the stuffing out of him.

But he finally made his escape, leaving the old man in the belief that he had banged the man who had played the trick upon him.

"After all, Shorty, I half believe that you are at the bottom of the affair," said Angie.

"Yes, hang me, if I don't believe so too," the old man chipped in, and then he ran up the back stairs to his chamber, accompanied by a laugh from Shorty and the Kid.

"You fellows should be ashamed of yourselves for playing such a trick on your father," protested Angie.

"Father! why, he's my son-in-law."

"I'm sure you did it," said she, following the old man.

Meanwhile, Shorty's wife and also the Kid's wife were bidding the laughing guests good-night, as they retired, delighted with their evening's amusement.

Well, it was a racket all around, and those who had witnessed the entertainment and seen the joke that was played on the old man, went away to tell of it among their friends, and that accounts for this part of the business having got into the daily papers about that time.

But the laugh was clearly on the old man, and after the guests had gone they all joined against him and made it warm.

Yet he could not understand it, not being up in the business, as were Shorty and the Kid, and so he was obliged to stand it with the best grace he could.

"Well, you have the laugh on me this time, but I'll bet you never get it again. Take down your stage; the season has closed, and if you ever arrange another one, don't count on me as one of the attractions," said the old man.

"Nix. Der show'd be no good without you," said the Kid.

"Bah! the idea of making a clown of me! the idea of making a laughing stock of me!"

"Soy, dad, that shows good management; good business ter make ther most of what yer've got. If ever I go inter ther biz again, I'll give yer a cold two hundred a week an' expenses."

"For what?" he demanded.

"Ter play de prima donna."

"Oh, go soak yourself. You are forever getting me into some scrape or other. But I am done with you now, and I'll bet a thousand dollars that you'll never get one of your snaps off on me again."

"Shake!" said Shorty, coming forward and extending his hand.

"What do you mean?"

"I'll take der bet."

"On what?"

"Bet yer a thousand cold that I'll work racket another racket on yer inside of a month."

"No, sir."

"Will yer shake on it?"

"Of course I will."

"A cold thousand on it?"

"Certainly."

"Put it there!"

"There it is," replied the old man, offering him his hand.

"Soy, yer all witnesses?"

"Yes," the women folks all replied.

"Good 'nough," and they continued their shake.

"Put down the date, ladies," said the old man.

"Yes, we will remember it," they replied.

"But, understand, Shorty."

"What?"

"That our old agreement is off."

"What one?"

"About my playing tricks on you."

"Cert. if you get it on me afore I do on you, the thousand's yours. Catch on?"

"Of course I do, so let it rest at that."

And so the matter was arranged. A light supper was then partaken of, and all hands retired for the night.

Then it was that Ginger Jones came out of his hiding-place and began to look around.

"By golly, dat were a narrer 'scape so' dis chille. What a fool I war. Might hab known dat Shorty would hab laid it all ter me. Neber catch me in a racket wid him any mo'. He am de wuss I eber seen. I'll bet dat man hab got a live debel in him bigger nor a possum. Nuffin but clean debel could do what he do, an' I'm done wid him drefful shuah."

Having delivered himself of this, he turned down the lights and sought his bed.

Of course the old man was full of it after reaching his own chamber, for he never would admit that Shorty could work over him on practical jokes.

"Now you just wait, Angie, and see how sick I will make that fellow," said he.

"Ah, I am afraid you will not do it," said she.

"What makes you think I will not?"

"Because in all the attempts you have made to do so, he has always got the best of you, either on the same joke, or another that quickly followed."

"How about those dress shirts?"

"Well, I will admit that you rather had him on that affair," said she, laughing, and in which he quickly joined; "but don't be too sure of it."

"Nonsense, my dear, I will bet you a new silk dress that I will get the best of him before he gets the best of me."

"All right, I'll do it," said she, laughing.

And so another compact was made.

But the next day, and the next two, passed pleas-

antly and without any attempt on the part of anybody to put up a job of any kind.

Indeed, the wager stood well to be forgotten, to all appearances, although both Shorty and the old man were all the while thinking how they should work a certain something that should make the other sick.

But Shorty, however, was working down deeper than he was, for he had made up his mind that something more than an ordinary practical joke would have to be resorted to in order to catch the old man, since he would be continually on the lookout, and would notice the slightest move he might make.

He had an idea, however, if he could only work it out, and to do so kept him quiet for the next week.

But during that time he learned of the wager between the old man and his wife, and as this was just what he would have wished for he at once began negotiations with her.

The result was all he could have hoped for, and in a short time he had not only Angie but her mother and sister on his side.

Shortly afterwards a letter came to the house addressed to Mrs. Josiah Burwick, which read as follows:

"Dear Madam: I am sorry for one so young as you are; I am sorry that I must break up this dream of bliss that you have indulged in so long, but my duty to myself and children compels me to unmask a villain, and to assure you that you have been imposed upon, outraged, and that I am the lawful wife of the man who claims to be your husband. This I can prove, and will do so if you wish to prosecute him."

"AMANDA BURWICK."

Now came the time for Angelina to act.

They met first at supper, as she had purposely arranged that they should, he having been out somewhere during the afternoon.

"Ah, my dear, how do you feel this evening?" he asked, cheerily.

"Sir!" said she, starting back, and looking like a stone image in her chair.

The other members of the family looked up.

"Why, Angie, I—what is the matter?" he asked, looking at her in astonishment.

"Don't speak to me, sir!" she replied, frigidly.

"What, not speak to you?"

"No, sir, go speak to your legal wife."

"Good Heavens! I—I thought I was speaking to her."

"No, sir; I am not your wife."

"What?"

"Perfidious old man, read that!" said she, throwing the letter down before him.

"Eh?" and bewildered he picked it up, opened it nervously, and read.

The others swapped winks while he was doing so, noting the expression of his face.

"What is it, dad?" asked Shorty.

"I—I'll be hanged if I know," he replied, at the same time manifesting great excitement.

"Lemme read it."

"It's a mistake. I—I—"

"Yea, sir; I should say it was a mistake," sneered his wife.

Shorty took the letter and read it aloud, at which the others put on expressions of great surprise and horror.

"Hey?" said Shorty, looking at him.

"What's dat?"

"Sir, what is the meaning of this?" demanded Shorty's wife. "You old bald-headed wretch, have you betrayed my daughter?"

"Have you betrayed my sister?" asked Caddy.

"Say, how's this anyway?" demanded Shorty.

"Soy, have yer been makin' bigamy?" the Kid chipped in.

"I—I—I tell you I don't know anything about it," he stammered.

"Indeed! You mean you thought we should never know anything about it. Oh, why did I not die in short clothes!" moaned Angelina, burying her face in her napkin.

"Oh! why did I ever have a daughter grow big enough to be betrayed?"

"Oh, why was I ever found?" asked Shorty, in a wildly pathetic tone.

"Oh, why hadn't a mule kicked me when I was a baby?" moaned the Kid.

"Oh, my dear sister!"

"Sir, do you wish me to claw your ugly eyes out?" demanded Shorty's wife.

"No—no—"

"Then claw out yourself," said she, pointing to the door.

"But I—I assure you there is no truth in the letter."

"Prove it, sir, prove it!"

"I—I can do so; it was written by an enemy. Bring on your Amanda! I dare any Amanda in the world to face me and say that I ever married her!" said he, commencing to warm up a bit.

"I will not believe you, sir," sobbed his wife, with her face still in her napkin.

"Too thin, ole man—too thin," said Shorty, shaking his head and looking terribly sober.

"Oh, yer sly ole dog!" said the Kid.

"You terrible old wretch!" said Caddy.

"Oh, you bald-headed old libertine!"

"Oh, you nasty, horrible, terrible, dreadful old creature!" cried Angie, getting up from the table and leaving the room.

"Hold on here! I tell you that this is all a mistake," he cried.

"A mistake in our finding it out," said the Kid's wife, following her sister.

"It is a fraud, I say!"

"And so are you," replied Shorty's wife, also getting up and leaving the room.

"Thunder and blazes!" he exclaimed.

"Pop, I shake yer!" said the Kid, also going out of the room.

"Hold on, I say!" the old man yelled.

"No good," said Shorty.

"What's no good, sir?"

"You, dad."

"But I tell you it is all a lie!"

Shorty shook his head doubtfully.

"It's some blackmailing trick."

"Too thin."

"Shut up, sir! How dare you tell me I am a bigamist?" he thundered.

"There's ther letter."

"But it's a falsehood! I never knew any such a person as this, sir."

"Hold on, dad. May as well own up ter me; I'll never give yer away."

"Shut up, I tell you!" said he, striking the table so hard that it made the dishes rattle and caused Ginger to jump back.

"Oh, yer know yer was kinder slashin' 'round loose for a good many years."

"What if I was—what has that to do with it, I would like to know?"

"Oh, well, roosters will be roosters, yer know."

"You lie, sir—you lie!"

"No, I'm sittin' here," said he, calmly.

"Don't you suppose, sir, that I should know it if ever I got married?"

"Oh, well, I've known of chaps gettin' full an' gettin' married, an' forgettin' all about it the next day."

"Nonsense, sir. I was never married to but one woman before this one, and that was your mother, sir."

"Maybe this is her," suggested Shorty.

"Bah to you, sir! She has been dead these twenty years. No, sir, it is some confounded blackmailing scheme, and I know it. What the deuce are you shaking your head for?"

"Cos I'm goin' ter shake you."

"What?"

"I'm done."

"Impossible!"

"Sure pop. I'm married an' settled down, an' I can't afford ter stand any of this nonsense even from my dad," said he, rising.

"Be quiet, I tell you; it is all a lie."

"Ah! ye'll have ter prove it, dad. I hold up my hands. I'm done with yer till yer shake off this mud," and shaking his head sadly he waddled from the room. The paralyzed old man watched him with open mouth and eyes.

For half a minute he did not speak. He scarcely breathed as he kept his eyes fastened upon the door out of which his son, his last friend, had gone.

Finally he looked around and saw Ginger standing at the door of the butler's pantry.

Seizing a plate he hurled it at his head.

"What are you laughing at, you black son of a gun?" he demanded.

"I—I warn't laughin', sah," moaned Ginger, trying to get out of the way.

"You lie, sir; you lie, you black scoundrel!" and he hurled a cup at him, breaking it into fifty pieces.

"Don't, sah! I—I warn't laughin', sah. I was cryin', shuah," plead the coon.

"Shut up, sir. What the devil was you crying about?" and bang went abother plate at the dodging, cringing darkey.

"I—I war cryin', sah, cryin' fo' you—"

"What business have you to cry for me?" he demanded, hurling a slop-bowl at him savagely.

"Cos—cos—"

"Shut up, you infernal idiot! How dare you cry for me?" and by this time he so completely lost his temper, that he caught up the dishes from the table and continued to hurl them at the poor darkey, until there was scarcely anything left on the table, and the pantry where he stood was filled with ruin.

After satisfying his anger in this way, he got up and strode from the room.

"Oh, by gosh! Wonder if I's dead yet? Der ole man's clean off his nut fo' shuah. Bet five cents dat Shorty am at de bottom of this yer. Whoo! he's broke all dat whole breakfus' set to smash. Lucky dat my skull am thick, or it would be in pieces like de dishes," he mused, and, after feeling himself over for a moment, he commenced to pick up the broken china, which was strewn everywhere.

Meantime the old man had proceeded to his chamber. But on reaching the door, he found it locked against him.

He knocked, but there was no response. He called, but no one spoke; and, after waiting a few moments, he turned and went to the chamber occupied by Shorty and his wife.

But here the same thing awaited him. The door was locked, and no one responded to his call or demand.

Then he went to the kid's chamber, only to go through with the same thing, and then it began to dawn upon him that he was shut out, tabooed, given the grand shake by every member of the family.

The thought almost overpowered him, and, scarcely able to believe it, he went to his own room once more and tried to get in.

It was no go, however, and reluctantly he went down to the front parlor, where he took a seat and began to think the matter over.

He knew, of course, that there was no truth in it, but he never once tumbled to the racket that was working against him.

"Oh, she will never live with me again if I do, not clear myself of this foul stain, and the whole family has gone back on me," he moaned.

"I know what I'll do; I'll put a personal in the

Herald, demanding that this 'Amanda Burwick' face me. Confound her, I'll show her up to the world as a blackmailer, yes I will," and going to a little fancy desk that stood in the back parlor, he wrote an advertisement for the supposed woman.

Not satisfied with this, however, he wrote a reward, offering five hundred dollars for the production of the alleged Amanda, after which he jammed his hat upon his head and left the house for the newspaper office.

No sooner had he gone, however, than the conspirators assembled in Shorty's chamber, where they had a royal good family laugh, one that just pleased them all, and Ang was even more delighted than either of the others, as she was even now sure of winning her new silk dress.

"But hold on, ther racket's only just commenced," said Shorty, and then he told them what the old man would probably do. "But I'll fix that, no fear."

And amid a glow of pleasure and laughter the curtain goes down upon the first act of the farce of "Bigamy."

CHAPTER XII.

THE racket on the old man Burwick, in which they were all pitted against him, was kept up splendidly, and it was a racket!

On his return from the *Herald* office, where he had been to put in a "Personal" for the woman whom he supposed had written the letter to his wife, claiming to have been married to him long ago, and also to offer a reward of five hundred dollars for the production of the said Amanda Burwick, he met with the same cold reception.

Indeed, he could not get a glimpse of any member of the family. Shorty and the Kid had gone out to ride, and the women folks still had their doors locked against him.

Even his own wife refused to let him in, and after trying in vain to get a chance to speak to her, he ordered his horse hooked up and started out on the road, hoping to meet his sons and have an understanding with them.

The ride through the Park was all very nice, and out upon the avenue was nice, but he did not encounter the objects of his search until he reached the celebrated roadside inn, known everywhere as Judge Smith's.

There he met Shorty and the Kid.

They received him in the bar-room with a grand laugh, and as several of the friends of both parties had been posted, the laugh was loud and strong at his expense.

"Now, look here, Shorty, you know how this thing is," protested the old man, taking him to one side, after he had "ordered them up" for the whole party.

"Nix. Don't know nuffin' 'bout it," replied Shorty, still very sober.

"But I tell you it is all a fraud."

"Yes, I guess that's so."

"Now you shut up! I have put a personal in the *Herald* for that old girl who claims to be my wife, and I have also offered a reward of five hundred dollars for anybody who will produce her."

"Bah!"

"What?"

"Old time, dad."

"Old time what?"

"Old time bluff."

"How?"

"Why, it's all a bluff racket, of course. I tumble," replied Shorty, coldly.

"You do? How?"

"Oh, the old racket of bluffing off. Now give us a rest, dad. I won't have it."

"What?"

"This innocence."

"I tell you I was innocent. This is a put-up job, and you ought to know it."

"Nix, dad, nix. As I told yer before, I simply shake yer. From this time forth yer no relation of mine," and Shorty turned calmly away.

The old man was paralyzed even more than before. Nobody appeared to believe what he said, whatever he might say, and on the contrary everybody was down on him.

He was a bigamist to all intents and purposes until he could prove to the contrary.

But when they saw his "personal" in the *Herald*, together with the reward he had offered, he felt confident that he would be acquitted.

That is what he thought.

But in spite of all he could say or do, neither Shorty or the Kid would listen to him when he attempted to explain matters.

They would drink with him when he ordered things up, but when he attempted, on the strength of it, to make friends with them, and to convince them that the whole thing was a fraud, and evidently a blackmailing job, they turned away and refused to listen to him.

After staying there for an hour or so, they ordered their teams, and started for home. On the way, of course, they raced, but somehow or other the old man couldn't get any speed out of his horse, and he was feeling so good when he left the hotel that he did not hear the laugh that the spectators let off as they started.

"Come on!" shouted Shorty, holding in his team.

"What's ther matter with yer?"

"Soy!" called the Kid, "I thought there was some go in dat ole crow!"

"Oh, that's all right, G'lang!" whooped the old man, cutting his horse with the whip.

But the beast couldn't go any faster, and it made him mad.

He noticed that people whom he passed wore broad grins, and now and then some one would laugh loud and give him a yell, and yet he supposed that it was

only because he was trying to get ahead of Shorty's team.

Finally a mounted policeman rode up alongside of him, laughing as he did so.

"Say, pop, what er yer tryin' ter do?"

"What business is that of yours? G'lang!" and he gave his nag another dose of long cuts.

"But, say—"

"Shut up, or I'll report you."

"Ha, ha, ha! But, say, what's the matter with yer wheel?" asked the policeman.

"Eh, what?" he asked, pulling up.

"Got a drag, eh?"

"What is that you say?"

The policeman pointed to the hind wheel of the old man's wagon.

He took a look at it himself, and as he did so he heard a shout of laughter from Shorty and the Kid, who were only a few rods in advance.

Somebody had tied the wheel, and all the way from Judge Smith's it had been sliding, which accounted for his not being able to get up the usual amount of speed.

"What is it?" he asked, somewhat confused.

"Tied."

"Good gracious!"

"Been playing it on yer, eh?"

"Well, I should say so. But I'll bet a thousand dollars that those two snoozers ahead there did it, or got somebody to do it at Judge Smith's."

"Good joke, eh?" said the officer, dismounting and taking out his knife.

"Joke! wait until I get hold of 'em! hic! I'll make 'em sick," said he, shaking his fist at the laughing jokers.

Laughing, the policeman cut the rope that had tied the wheel so long.

"Now you are all right."

"Thanks, but just watch and see me make those fellows sick," said he, drawing up his lines and handing the policeman a dollar.

Once more free, and being sobered up a bit by the episode, the old man let his horse out and started to overtake his mischievous sons who had put the job up on him.

But it was one thing to go for Shorty's team and another to overtake it, for he pulled the ribbons over as fine a pair of trotters as pranced over the road.

After driving until they reached the entrance to the Park, Shorty pulled up and allowed him to come up behind.

"You chaps think you are very smart, don't you?" he called to them.

"What's ther matter with yer now?"

"You tied my wheel."

"What! we tied *nothing*," replied Shorty.

"Git out!" chipped in the Kid.

"You tied my wheel!"

"Oh, you tied yourself with cham."

"No, sir, I drank scarcely anything."

"Then why didn't yer see dat yer wheel was tied?" shouted the Kid.

"How could I know?"

"Course yer couldn't. Too budgy."

"Oh, shut up! I understand it. It was a good joke. I acknowledge that, but how about this other racket?"

"What?"

"Why, this bigamy business."

"G'lang!" shouted Shorty, and his horses darted away like a streak of wind, leaving the old man far behind and utterly unanswered.

This conduct on the part of his sons was quite as exasperating as any that had been tormenting him since the racket begun.

For a moment he was confused and stunned, and during that moment Shorty turned into another road, and he was left alone to make his way home as best he could.

By a shorter route the two jokers reached home at least fifteen minutes ahead of him, but they left no word.

Going into the house, he found the same state of affairs. The parlor was dark, although he had never known it to be so before, and when he went to his chamber, he found it also dark, and got no response to his repeated raps.

He was still locked out.

Then he tried Shorty's room, bound, to have some explanation, but there he found the door locked and nobody to exchange a word with.

Almost broken-hearted he sought the chamber of the Kid and his wife.

He rapped two or three times without receiving a response, finally he called:

"Charley! let me in."

"Who's there?" asked the Kid.

"Why, me."

"Who's me?"

"Your grandfather, to be sure."

"Git!"

"What?"

"Go."

"How?"

"Yer no grandpop of mine."

"What is that you say?"

"Begone, base bigamist!" cried his wife.

"Say, Charley, let me in."

"Nix, no big in mine."

"But I want to speak to you."

"No good. Git, I won't have it."

"Go to your lawful wife!" cried the Kid's wife.

"But she refuses to admit me."

"Nonsense. Go try her."

"I have."

"Go try Amanda," said Caddy.

"Oh, jam Amanda! This business is played out; I won't have any more of it," said he, vexed beyond endurance.

"Go shoot yerself an' spare der honor of der fam," cried the Kid.

This made him feel almost like doing it, and reluctantly he turned away.

But what the deuce was he to do if he did *not* shoot himself?

He was shut out everywhere; and after roaming around the house for quite a while, he finally took up with a spare room and went to bed, a broken-up and disgusted man.

He slept but little that night, all the while thinking that when the family saw his cards in the morning *Herald* it would quiet them and make him solid again.

But he did not know, of course, of the racket that Shorty had put up on him; and when breakfast-time

Ginger to call the old man, while Shorty talked to the Dutch woman.

That troubled husband came inquiringly into the parlor, looking from one to another, and finally at the stranger.

Every one wore a sober face.

Angelina was the first one to speak.

"Woman," said she, addressing the stranger, "be good enough to tell us your name!"

"It vos Amanda Burwick," said she, in a tip-top Dutch style.

The old man staggered back speechless.

"Are you related to any one here?"

"Vell, I should schmile somedimes bond dot," she replied.

"Oh, Angle, don't talk that way! I swear to you that I never saw this woman before in my life," said he, earnestly.

"Too thin, ole man, too thin!" cried Shorty, and the others re-echoed it.

"Not a bit of it, woman. Where do you say I married you?" he demanded, turning upon her.

"Owid in dot Frisco," said she, at which there arose a derisive laugh.

"In San Francisco?"

"Yaw."

"That's it. She's got you, dad," cried Shorty.

"Not much. How long ago was it?"

"Aboud den year."

"That's it; you were there then."

"I bade you be vos, and so vos I. Bud he rund away



"Shut up, you infernal idiot! How dare you cry for me?" and by this time he so completely lost his temper, that he caught up the dishes from the table and continued to hurl them at the poor warky, until there was scarcely anything left on the table, and the pantry where he stood was filled with ruin.

came, when he expected to meet the family in the dining-room, he found that breakfast had been ordered in their rooms.

As for him, he took his in the kitchen, greatly to the wonderment of Bridget.

He might have gone outside after it, but he was bound to stay in the house now until this business was settled.

Of course, the conspirators saw the cards he had published, and were only waiting for ten o'clock to come.

He kept Ginger running from one room to another with messages, but he brought back no satisfaction for him.

"What did Charley say?" he asked, as Ginger returned from his chamber.

"He tole me so' ter tole yer to go buy a piece ob rope an' hang yourself," replied Ginger, with a wide grin.

"He did?"

"Yes, sah."

"Well, sir, I guess *not*! I own this house, and I somehow conclude that I shall stay here just as long as I like. Go back and tell both Shorty and the Kid that if they will only come down here I will spank them!" roared the old man, now wild with rage.

But Ginger only turned away to laugh and attend to his duties, while the old man went out on the back piazza to smoke a cigar.

Meantime things were working.

A few moments before ten o'clock the bell rang, and a strapping Dutch woman inquired for Mrs. Josiah Burwick.

Ginger had received his orders, and so he promptly showed her into the parlor and notified the conspirators.

They all came down at once, and Mrs. Burwick sent

"Do you recognize that old party?" she asked, pointing to the old man.

"I should schmile some more if I did nod. He vos my old man."

"Your husband?"

"Yaw."

"Ha, ha! ho, ho!" by the company.

"It's a lie, a confounded lie! I never saw you before in my life!" roared the old man, recovering himself and rushing forward.

"Easy now, Josiah, don't get yer shird off," said she, waving her hand up and down, calmly.

"I tell you that you are an impostor!"

"Too thin, old man, too thin," said they all.

"Nothing of the kind; this woman is a fraud," said he, turning upon them.

"Josiah," said she, again turning the name, Josiah, "dot vos blayed owit. You know dot you vos mine huspant all der vile."

"You lie, woman, you lie!"

"Sdop a liddle or I bunch you on der snood like I used ter do somedimes," said she, rising angrily, at which the others laughed heartily.

The woman was at least two heads taller than he was, and looked as though perfectly able to turn him over her knee and spank him, and as she approached him he weakened.

"But, my dear woman, you are laboring under a mistake," said he, a trifle calmer.

"Dot vos a lie! I vos laborin' in a saloon for monish ter bay mine rent."

"But you are mistaken about my being your husband," he protested.

"I bade you nod."

"Shame on you, shame!" cried Shorty's wife.

"Oh, take your wife and go live with her," said Angelina, indignantly.

about me, and I could nix fint him novers pudgy quick, and so I come for dot Ni Yark und go me to work."

"Shame! shame!"

"I tell you it is false. Here, Ginger, go for a policeman!" he called.

"If you call in an offer I shall give you into custody on a charge of bigamy," said Angle, his wife, looking savagely at him.

"What?"

"I mean it."

"Oh, let him send for an officer if he wants to, for he deserves all he can get," said Shorty's wife.

"But, I tell you, it is all a mistake; a vile fraud. I was never married to this woman in the world, and, if she says so, she either lies willfully, or is mistaken. Bring on your proof!"

"Dot vos all righd. I dake you owit of dot Frisco und show you der dominie dot make us man und wife," said the woman.

"I dare you to do it."

"Come on!"

"Yes, go," said his wife.

"Cert," added Shorty and the Kid.

"What! go out to San Francisco on such a wild-goose chase as that? You must think I am a fool!"

"Oh, you are afraid to go!"

"Yes, base man, you are afraid to go!"

"No, I am not."

"Then why don't you go?"

"Because I know that there is no truth in it."

"Soy, why don't yer support der ole gal?" asked the Kid.

"Oh, you shut up."

"Yes, take her away, and live with her."

"Never! She is a humbug."

"I bade you dot you vas dot humpug. Bud I vants nodings to do mit you."

"Well, I should say not, because you have no right to do so."

"You may hafe him," said she, turning to Angelina.

"No, thank you; he belongs to you, and I want nothing further to do with him."

"Oh, Angie?" he moaned.

"Don't oh me, sir. Go to your wife."

"She is not my wife."

"Holt on liddle, I fix dot all righd," said the woman.

"Gife me fifty tollar, und I say no more dings about id. I gife you ub."

"Confound you! What right have you to give me up?"

have no objections," said Angie, offering him both her hands and laughing merrily.

The others approached him, laughing.

"Sold, by thunder!" exclaimed the old man, finally tumbling to the racket.

"Well, I should say so!"

CHAPTER XIII.

A MERRY feast followed the bigamy racket, which the family, assisted by Gus Williams, as a Dutch woman claiming to be the wife of the old man, you may well believe.

It was rather a hard pill for him to down, but when he found that his wife was one of the conspirators,

"And how 'bout Ginge?" asked the Kid, and then they all laughed.

This was while they were seated at the dinner table and Ginger Jones stood behind them, grinning hugely.

"What about Ginge?" he asked, finally.

"Why, he is almost as badly broken as the breakfast dishes were," said Shorty's wife.

The old man turned around and took a look at the darkey. It was a comical picture.

"Did I hurt you, Ginge?" he asked.

"Golly, boss, you nearly broke me all up."

"What did I do?"

"You pelted me with dishes, sah."

"Oh, I did, eh?"

"Neber seen nuffn like it, sah."



"It's a lie—a confounded lie! I never saw you before in my life!" roared the old man, recovering himself and rushing forward. "Easy now, Sojiah; don't get yer shird off," said she, waving her hand up and down, calmly. "I tell you that you are an impostor!"

"Too thin, old man, too thin," said they all.

"All righd; den I gife you ub some odder vays mit der bollice."

"Oh, take him away with you, woman," said Angie, sweeping from the room.

"Yes, take him away," added Shorty's wife, following her indignantly.

"Lug him out; we're done with him," said Shorty, leaving them.

"Oh, bounce him!" sneered the Kid, following the example of the others, and leaving the old man and the woman alone.

The thought that this might be a blackmailing job, and that fifty dollars would buy the woman off, struck the old man, and the moment they were left alone he asked her if she would accept fifty dollars and clear out, after admitting to his wife that she was mistaken, and she quickly agreed to it. Out came the old man's pocket-book, and from it a fifty-dollar bill, which he handed to her.

The conspirators returned just in time to catch on to the transaction, and of course they laughed.

"Dot vos all righd. I make me some misdake bond dot. He vos nod mine huspant," said she, at the same time throwing off a bonnet and wig and standing before the party, none other than Gus Williams, the well-known Dutch comedian.

The old man started back in surprise.

"Gus Williams!" he exclaimed, and then a chorus of laughter arose that made the walls ring.

"Sold again!"

"I'll take that thousand dollars, dad," said Shorty, offering his hand.

"What thousand dollars?"

"Ther bet we had that I wouldn't play a sell on yer."

Soy, how's that for high?"

"And I will take that new silk dress, if you

and had so artfully won from him a silk dress on the bet, he finally braced up and joined in the laugh.

It was a big sell, as the reader will remember, and caused the old fellow much sorrow and anxiety. And added to that, the story got out among his friends, and it did seem that he would never get done treating on account of it, as he invariably did whenever anybody asked him how his California Dutch wife was.

But of course nobody enjoyed it so much as did Shorty and the Kid. They grew fat on such rackets as that.

"Now I hope you fellows are satisfied, and that you will let me alone," said the old man, one day.

"Yes, we're done, that is, if you don't forget and try a snap on us," replied Shorty.

"Confound you and your snaps! I want nothing more to do with them."

"I guess you may as well give up the practical joking business, pop," said his wife, laughing merrily at him.

"Yes, my son, it is very naughty," put in Shorty's wife, "especially when you get the worst of it."

"As he, almost invariably does," added the Kid's wife.

"But you see they are two to one against me," replied the old man, who in the face of last and worst that had ever been played on him, could not bear to admit that he could not work a practical joke as well as anybody.

"And for that reason, if for no other, you should not give them a chance to get even with you, my son."

"Well, they have got to mind their business if I do mine."

"And of course they will."

"But, soy, how 'bout those dishes?" asked Shorty.

"Ah! not used to being pelted with dishes, are you?"

"No, sah; it war my fust experience in de capacity ob a target," he replied, while a grin overspread his features.

"Well, I am sorry if I hurt you, but I was crazy at the time, and of course not responsible for what I did. But you must lay the blame to these boys of mine, Ginge."

"All right, sah."

"And here is a dollar for you."

"Thank you, sah."

"Soy, let me pelt yer with dishes if I'll give yer a dollar?" asked Shorty.

"No, sah, I'd rather be excused if it don't make any difference to you, sah."

"Rather an unprofitable amusement, I should say," suggested the Kid's wife.

"Yes, and you may regard yourself as fortunate that it was no worse, Ginge, for if I had had a pistol I should have killed you as likely as not."

"You war powerful mad, sah."

"And I had good reason to be," said he, and the conversation was smothered in laughter.

But scarcely a week had passed before the old fellow was trying to think of some trick that he could play back on the boys, for he hated dreadfully to stand the laugh from everybody whom he encountered.

He had said he would not do so, but the temptation to go back on his word was almost too great to stand. He said not a word to his wife, resolved that if he ever did playback a trick upon them that no one should know of it.

And so he cudgeled his brains whenever he was alone, hoping to think of some way whereby he might

turn some of the laugh which Shorty and the Kid were enjoying.

But not a thing could he think of that had not been tried by them at different times, and so the time wore pleasantly away.

Indeed, neither Shorty nor the Kid put up any jobs on anybody for quite a while, and as the weather was exceedingly fine they were out with their teams nearly every day, leaving the house and its management to Ginger Jones.

This responsibility made the darkey feel very big, and the way he bossed the servants around was a caution to coons.

But there was one of them that he couldn't boss, and that the cook, Bridget, although he wanted to very much.

"Bad luck ter yer black skin," she would say, "it's best yer don't come near me wid ony av yer bossin'."

"Miss Bridget, I would hab you fo' to know dat I am in charge ob de house."

"Charge yer grandmother! Yer may have ther charge av onything yer loike, but be aisy how yer come where I am, an' be dacint in yer manners as well, or I'll knock yer two eyes inter one, so I will," said she, shaking her big red fist at him.

This settled him. He knew by sad experience better than to talk back, but the first chance he got, he complained to Shorty about the impudence she gave him.

"Why don't yer put a head on her?" asked Shorty, looking sober.

"I can't do it, sah."

"Is she too many for yer?"

"I guess yea, boss," said he, shaking his head and grinning sadly.

"Nonsense. Don't never give in ter a gal."

"But sposen yer can't help it, boss?"

"Yer can if yer've got any pluck."

"How?"

"Why, use force. Take a whip down-stairs with yer, an' if she gives yer any of her lip, just give her a few cuts with it. See?"

"But what she be doin' all de while?"

"Oh, she'll weaken ther moment she sees you in dead earnest."

"Do you think so, boss?" he asked, with considerable earnestness.

"Cert. Nothing like a whip ter make a woman come up ter law. Try it on Biddy; I'll give you permission."

"But—"

"But what? You coons are always butting something or other."

"But s'pose she kicks?"

"Give it ter her till she stops," said Shorty, leaving him and fully believing that he had got a racket started.

Well, Ginger thought the matter over for several days. He was a queer sort of a coon, and nothing pleased him more than to be left in charge of the house so that he could boss the servants.

Biddy was the only one who rebelled at his authority, and he finally made up his mind to follow Shorty's advice the next time he was left in charge, if she refused to obey him.

It was a week or more before he got a chance, every member of the family going out to ride one day, leaving things in his hands as usual.

"Now dat gal's got ter mind me or she gets de wust ob it," he muttered, and then he went out to the stable and got a whip.

Returning to the house he went to the head of the basement stairs, and called:

"Bridget, stop dat singing!"

Indeed, he could not think of anything else to say just then, and the sound of her singing as she went about her work gave him a good opportunity to start a quarrel with her, for he knew that would be how the matter would have to commence.

"Futs that ye soy?" she asked back.

"Stop that foolish singing. I's boss ob de house now, an' I won't hab it."

"Yer won't?"

"No, an' I wish you to understan' it."

"Go ter ther devil!" said she, and then began to sing louder than before.

"If you don't stop dat noise I jus' go down dar to you an' make you do it."

"Yer will, hoy? Well, just yees come down an' try it on, will yees?"

There was the challenge, plump out, and now he must meet it at once or not at all.

So he grasped the whip and went down into the kitchen where she was.

"Put the devil's ther matter wid yees onyway?" she demanded, the moment he appeared.

"I wants you to make less noise."

"An' who ther blazes cares a snap fut yer want?" she asked, placing her arms akimbo and facing him resolutely.

"You have got to mind me when I tells you to do a thing. You heah me?"

"Bad luck ter yer. Who be you onyway?"

"I's in charge ob de house, an' everybody's got ter mind me," said he, displaying the whip.

"Fut's that ye soy?"

"You'd better mind me, that's what I say."

"Bad manners ter yer; get out av this or I'll make yer two beens break yer back!" and she made a rush for him.

Ginger knew that the critical moment had arrived, and that it was make or break with him, so he hit her a sharp blow with the whip.

Well, he woke up an Irish hornet's nest that time in short order.

With a wild whoop she dashed at him with the fury of an enraged tigress.

Getting in on his snout with her left hand she knocked him down so suddenly that his head struck the floor before his heels did.

Then she pounced upon him, and in less than two minutes he was a sight to behold.

Of course he yelled murder and tried to get away, but she was on top, and was strong enough to keep there until she got satisfaction.

"Stroike me, will yees, yer black spalpeen!" she would exclaim every time she patted him.

"Hole on! Luff me up! Stop it, I tole yer! De boss tole me fo' ter hit yer!" he cried.

"He did, hey? Well, there's one for the boss," she replied, patting him again.

"Police! Murder!"

"I'll give yees all the murder yees wants," she replied, and then springing away from him she seized the whip.

She went for him with it, as though to polish off the rougher work she had put upon him with her fists.

Just as quickly as he could, you bet he got up and dusted out of that kitchen.

But she hadn't got satisfaction yet, for she followed him up-stairs, cutting him with the whip as fast as she could use it.

Finally, however, he managed to escape and lock himself into the sitting-room.

"Ah! yer bloody, thavin' nagar yer! I wonder fut yees think now about hittin' me wid a whip? Whoop! Come out for some more!" she called, and to make sure that he heard her, she pounded savagely upon the door.

But he probably declined her invitation with thanks, or at least he was thankful for getting away from her.

He didn't want any more; he was entirely satisfied with what she had given him, so he made no answer, and she turned to explain the matter to her fellow servants, who had gathered to learn the cause of the ruction.

Their verdict was that it served him just right, for they all hated him because he bossed them when the family was away.

But that was a death blow to his tyranny, and almost one to himself.

Slowly and sadly he proceeded to wash the blood from his swollen mug, yet never for a moment suspecting that after all he had simply been made the victim of one of Shorty's practical jokes.

He had scarcely got washed off when the family returned and found him.

And wasn't he a sweet-looking plum!

One of his lookers was entirely closed and the other one inclined that way. His snout had by this time swollen to three times its natural size, and his swollen kisser resembled a big chunk of liver more than it did a mouth.

Shorty tumbled the moment he set eyes on him, but the others looked on with amazement.

"Why, Ginger Jones, what is the matter with you?" asked the old man.

"Guess he's been tryin' ter pick the gray hairs out of a mule's hind leg," suggested the Kid, and then Ginger made a ghostly attempt at smiling.

The attempt, however, was so comical, or at least it made him look so comical, that the entire party gave him the grand laugh.

"What's the matter with yer, Ginge?" asked Shorty, approaching him.

The unhappy darkey with bossy aspirations attempted to speak, but it required several efforts on his part to enable him to do so distinctly enough to be understood, his mouth was so terribly swollen.

"Boss, you know what you tole me," he said, after trying a while.

"Me? 'Bout what?"

"'Bout dat gal."

"Which girl?"

"Bridget, the cook."

"Yes."

"Well, I——" but there was no occasion for him to speak any further; his looks told the rest.

"What was it?" asked Shorty's wife.

"Biddy, she won't mind me when I's left in charge ob de house, an' Mr. Shorty he tole me fo' to took a horse-whip to her."

"And you attempted it, did you?"

Ginger nodded, sadly.

"It served you just right. The idea of your striking a woman with a whip!"

"Yes, it serves him just right," said Angie.

"Only he didn't get all he deserved," added the Kid's wife.

"But he tole me to," protested Ginger.

"And I suppose if he had told you to put your head in the fire you would have done it?"

"I allus 'beys orders, mam."

"Well, I guess you won't attempt to horsewhip the cook again right away, will you, even if he does tell you to?"

A sickly grin overspread his face.

"And so this is one of your rackets, is it?" asked the old man, addressing Shorty.

"Me? Nixy. He tole me not long ago that she refused to mind him when he was in charge of the shebang, an' I tole him to give her a horse-whipping. But I didn't think he was fool enough ter try it on," replied Shorty.

"Well, it appears he did. Go and get out of sight somewhere."

"Hold on, dad, I want him. Here, Kiddy," and turning to his son he whispered a few words to him, and he started from the house laughing.

"What do you want of him, I'd like to know?"

"I want ter sell him."

"Sell him! what for?" asked his wife.

"I think I can get a good price for him for a sign for a meat shop. But that's all right, Ginge. You keep quiet and I'll make your fortune."

"For goodness sake do not fool with that poor colored man any more," said Angie.

"I haven't been foolin' with him. It was Biddy," replied Shorty, laughing.

"Well, it served him perfectly right, anyhow," was the verdict of the ladies.

This verdict, however, made poor Ginger feel even sicker than his punishment did, for he had expected to receive the sympathy of the family, and now he was anxious to follow the old man's instructions and get out of sight.

But Shorty had no notion of losing him, for there was more fun in him yet.

In about fifteen minutes the Kid returned in company with a photographer, who had brought his instruments along, greatly to the surprise of Ginger, who looked at the camera with all the eyes he had, not knowing what the deuce it was for, anyhow.

"Come, Ginger, we're going ter have yer photo," said Shorty.

"Great golly, boss!"

"Oh, that's all right; you can make a plenty of money by sellin' 'em."

"Bunnell will buy one, sure pop."

Ginger made a faint protest, but before he knew it almost they had him in a chair and posed for a picture.

The photographer could scarcely keep a sober face while he worked, but he succeeded the first time—succeeded in getting the mug of the homeliest coon alive.

But one would not satisfy Shorty, and so he had him taken in another position, a side view, which made him look even worse, if such a thing was possible.

Well, after he had submitted to this, he was allowed to go to his room, where he remained for three days without showing up, during which time he had made up his mind not to attempt in the future to do much bossing.

Those photographs were curiosities. A stranger to the facts would have been puzzled to make out what the deuce it represented anyway. Shorty made me a present of one of them shortly afterwards, and as a curiosity I value it highly.

But the clouds blew away in a week or so, and all was sunshine once more. The late Biddy was as jolly over it as anybody when she learned that her little master had put up the job just on purpose to have him get what he deserved. Indeed, everybody was happy but Ginger, and even he, as the soreness and swelling went out of his mug, began to smile again.

Meantime the old man had not ceased to think over what he could do in order to get hunk with Shorty. He had not yet relinquished the notion, although he still kept his thoughts wholly to himself. Shorty's last snap on Ginger Jones made him more earnest about it than ever.

And strange as it may seem, Shorty was at the same time thinking up a pleasant little surprise for the old man. He couldn't live without having some sort of mischief afoot.

But about this time there were three highly interesting events foreshadowed in the Shorty family—"Coming events cast their shadows before."

The reader may perhaps guess what those events were, since they would certainly tend to complicate their already complicated family relationships a hundred fold more than they were now.

Probably those who struggled with the prize problem a few weeks ago will understand what I refer to.

And as these foreshadowings became more pronounced, all three of the husbands and their wives began to ponder upon what it possibly might be, and it made them serious.

CHAPTER XIV.

In the preceding chapter I hinted at a still further relational complication in the Shorty family.

Those events happened within a week of each other. The old man, Shorty, and the Kid became fathers. Each one of them had a boy born to him! Think of it!

The occurrences did not astonish them in the least neither did the complication of relationships, for they had figured it out until they became dizzy-headed, and without reaching the limit of realities even then.

Aside from this comical and bewildering complication they were three as happy fathers as ever were seen anywhere.

The babies were not unlike other babies, being full as handsome and quite as red, and when Shorty said that they all three looked like chunks of rare roast beef with fists and eyes and any quantity of dimity, he only employed a homely way of telling the truth.

"We have all seen handsomer things in the world than newly-born babies, although it is always hard to make mothers see them in that light."

The Burwick mansion appeared to be at once converted into a lying-in hospital. Doctors, nurses, visitors and anxious servants appeared to have full possession of it, while the smell of different sorts of medicine greeted the nostrils of all who came within a long distance of it.

It was too much for Shorty and the Kid, and so they kept away from the house for the most part, and spent their time out on the road or anywhere else that they felt inclined to go, although the old man hung around like a delighted boy.

Of course they received any number of congratulations when the thing became known. Indeed, Shorty and the Kid received many more than they cared to, for with every congratulation there was a laugh and a bottle of wine, together with the bewildering conundrum—"What are your relationships now?"

This of course became a great bore, and they finally repented ever having gone into the business at all, for however funny it might have been at first, it gradually ceased to be so after they had received a few hundred of these congratulations and questions.

"I'm sick," said Shorty one day. "They'll drive me ter ther crazy house."

"Me, too," replied the Kid, sadly.

"But ther old man likes it. He's growin' young over it, an' I'm growin' old."

"Why, it's just ole nuts for him; an' what der yer think he wants now?"

"Another one? Or does he want ter live long enough ter have ther kids get married?"

"No. Wants ter have a grand reception in honor of ther kids."

"What?"

"An' git a magicianer or one of dem coves as is good at figers ter work out der relationship for der amusement of der company. Twig?"

"Oh, he's got 'em bad. But I don't want any of it in mine," replied Shorty.

"My belly's full."

"We'll have ter chin him out of it," Shorty said, after thinking the matter over awhile.

But the thing couldn't be done. The old man was as delighted as a child with a new toy, and cared not a snap for what people said.

On the contrary, now that the laugh was up and he was in for it, he felt just like making the most of it, and giving the whole thing to the world, and on this account he had set his mind upon having a reception after the babies were old enough to christen.

Indeed, the proud and happy mothers were inclined the same way, so what Shorty and the Kid had to say in opposition to it made little or no difference.

"Oh, I think it would be nice," said Shorty's wife, one evening at the dinner table, where the subject came up.

"So do I."

"And I," said the other wives.

"Oh, it would be bully," sneered Shorty.

"Of course it would," contended the old man.

"Yes, for show blz," suggested the Kid.

"Yes, if we wanted ter hire ter some of ther side show managers, as ther wonderful crooked family. But we ain't on that racket now."

"Why it can't be helped, so what is the use of keepin' it from the world?" asked Angelina, blushing.

"Certainly."

"Well, I don't s'pose a boll can be helped, but it's snide taste ter call attention to it," replied Shorty.

"Oh, let's show our bolis!" added the Kid.

"Charley, I am surprised at you," said his wife, looking reproachfully at him.

"Cad, I'm s'prised at myself."

"Very little you think of your boy, I guess," said Angie.

"Yes, your boy," added his wife.

"Oh, he's as good as they make 'em; but what I'm kickin' 'bout is puttin' him on show."

"Why, any proud father would only be too glad to do such a thing. All of our friends are anxious to have us give a reception."

"Cert. They'll have a chance ter dead-head in on a show. Of course they're anxious," replied Shorty, bitterly.

But Shorty and the Kid were in the minority, and little by little they were won over to the proposed reception, which it was finally agreed should take place after the babies were a month old and had been christened.

The old man, as before stated, was heart and soul in the business, and went at making preparations for a grand hurrah.

Shorty and the Kid would have but little to do with the business. On the contrary, they were playing all sorts of tricks on the babies and their respective nurses whenever they could get a chance.

Now these babies not only looked so much alike that it was hard to tell one from the other, but being dressed differently, enabled the nurses and mothers to tell them apart.

One day Shorty snuffed a racket, and contriving to send the nurses down-stairs to their dinners while they took care of the babies, they proceeded to change their outer garments so as to mix them up personally almost as much as they were mixed up in relationship.

The mothers visited the nursery soon afterwards, but never suspected anything wrong at first, while Shorty and the Kid lit out.

Presently, however, Shorty's wife remarked:

"I wonder what can be the matter with my little one—he don't act a bit natural, and he don't seem near so heavy as usual."

"And mine doesn't act natural—but I certainly think he is heavier than usual," remarked the Kid's wife, who in reality had the old man's son.

"Mine does not act a bit natural. It must be that we have got them mixed," said Angie, looking at her kid.

"Impossible. Yours wears red ribbons, mine blue, and Caddy's violet—that's all right," said Shorty's wife, looking from one to the other.

"But I am sure there is something wrong."

"I feel it, too."

"Mercy! mercy!" and then they all started up to make a closer examination.

Each one wore the right colors, but yet their respective babies did not seem right. The mothers' instinct was sadly bothered.

"Oh!" Caddy finally screamed.

"What?" asked the alarmed other two.

"Shorty and the Kid!"

"What of them?"

"They were here!"

"Yes—well!"

"They may have changed the ribbons!"

"Mercy!" and all three of the anxious mothers began a hasty examination of the different suits of underclothes.

For an instant there were three bundles of dimity upon the bed, from which six little legs protruded, and three smothered cries were about all that could be seen or heard of the babies, as the alarmed mothers proceeded with their anxious investigations.

Then Shorty's wife rang the bell violently for the nurses, who came hurrying up-stairs, while the confused mothers began to cry and to make matters worse all around.

But the nurses could throw no light upon the subject. They had always distinguished the babies by the color of the ribbons they wore in the sleeves of their dresses, and there was so little difference in the weight of all three that it could scarcely be told.

Almost wild with anxiety, Shorty's wife went in search of the rogues, but they were nowhere to be found of course, and then she nearly paralyzed the old man by sobbingly informing him of the case.

He followed her up-stairs where the mixed babies and mixed opinions were, but he was as badly mixed as any of them.

"Those rascals ought to be murdered!" he finally exclaimed. "The idea that I cannot tell my son from their sons!"

"It is infamous!"

"It's a shame, and I have a great mind never to speak to Charley again as long as he lives," said Caddy, the Kid's wife.

"The wretches!"

"But what is to be done?" they tearfully asked, as they gazed upon the three kids.

"Oh, let me find the rascals!" cried the old man, rushing wildly from the room.

He meant business now, and no mistake. Had he found them there can be little doubt but that he would have laid violent hands upon the incorrigible jokers.

But he met Ginger Jones first.

"Where are those rascals?" he demanded so hotly that Ginger was startled.

"Wh—who, boss?"

"Shorty and the Kid."

"I gibs it up, boss. Las' time I seen 'em was out to de stable."

"Go and see if they are there, and if they are, kick them both into the house, where I can get my hands upon them!"

Ginger obeyed, but did not have the pleasure of kicking them into the house, for they had gone out to ride.

Then the old man was even more furious, and told Ginger what they had done.

"But I say, boss, can't yer tole 'em apart by de weight?"

"Eh?"

"You weighed all free ob 'em de day ahead ob yesterday."

"Ah! so I did, so I did! Good, good! I have it, I have it!" he exclaimed, dancing around like a delighted boy. "Go and get me the steelyards, quick!" and as Ginger flew to obey, he took out a memorandum-book in which he had entered the weight of the babies, it being customary with him to weigh them about twice a week and note the result.

He flew up-stairs, two steps at a time, yelling at the top of his voice: "I've got it! I've got it!" closely followed by Ginger with the weighing scales.

Bursting into the room he found that the nurses had stripped the kids to see if it was possible to solve the mystery by any marks. But neither of them had any strawberry or other fruit marks, and all were on the verge of despair.

"I'll fix it," cried the old man, gleefully, and in the course of five minutes he did so to the entire satisfaction of all hands.

His baby weighed a pound and a quarter more than Shorty's, and Shorty's weighed a half a pound more than that of the Kid, so by simply weighing them and consulting his note-book, he fixed things.

But when Shorty and the Kid returned, after their drive, the storm they had raised had not blown over by any manner of means, and they got in for it, all three of the wives and the old man going for them.

Of course they denied doing anything of the kind, but no one believed them.

"Well, soy, get a stencil plate an' mark yer kids, why don't yer?" asked Shorty.

"You ought to be ashamed of yourselves," was the reply they all gave him.

"I'm goin' ter have a strawberry sewed on ter my kid's left arm. Dat's der proper caper. What's a kid good for in this world of romance without a strawberry mark?" put in the little rascal.

But they failed to raise a laugh, however, for everybody was indignant at them, and a whole week passed before they again got into the good graces of their wives and the indignant old man.

However, the day of the christening and reception drew near, and seeing that they could not prevent it, Shorty and the Kid allowed the preparations to be completed, and then took part in the show with the best grace they had about them.

There was a great crowd of friends and curious people, and the three happy mothers sat in the reception-room holding their babies, and received the hearty congratulations of all.

Then the old man announced that he had employed a celebrated mathematician to figure out the relationships, which he would read for the amusement of all curious and interested ones, which he proceeded to do.

(I have previously published this curiosity of consanguinity, etc., but in order that it may become a part of the story of "The Shortys, Married and Settled Down," I republish it in this connection.)

GEORGE BURWICK ("SHORTY").

Shorty is the old man's son, father-in-law, great-grandson (because Shorty is his father's father, he is his own grandfather), and great-grandfather; Angie's step-son, step-father, father-in-law, great-grandson, and great-grandfather; the Kid's father, father-in-law, great-grandfather and nephew, because he is the Kid's brother-in-law's child; Caddy's step-father, father-in-law, great-grandfather and nephew; to himself he is

grandson and grandfather; to Kate, husband, grandfather and grandson; to his own son, by Kate, he is father, great-grandfather, and nephew, because he would be nephew to his step-mother's brother; to the old man's son, by Angie, he is half-brother, grandfather, and grand-nephew, because Shorty's brother is uncle to Shorty's daughter, and great-uncle to Shorty's daughter's step-son; to the Kid's son he is grandfather, great-great-grandfather, and cousin; his father's nephew is his cousin; Shorty's wife Kate is her own grandmother and granddaughter, the old man's granddaughter, mother-in-law, and great-granddaughter; she is Angie's step-daughter, mother-in-law, daughter-in-law, great-granddaughter, and great-grandmother; to the Kid she is step-mother, mother-in-law, great-grandmother, and niece; she is Caddy's mother, mother-in-law, great-grandmother and niece; to Shorty she is wife, grandmother and granddaughter; to her own son she is great-grandmother and niece; to the old man's son, by Angie, sister-in-law, grandmother and grand-niece, and great-great-grandmother; to the Kid's son she is grandmother, great-great-grandmother and cousin.

OLD MR. BURWICK'S RELATIONS.

The old man is his own grandfather and grandson, also his own great-grandfather and great-grandson; he is Shorty's father, son-in-law, great-grandfather, and great-grandson; to Kate he is son-in-law, father-in-law, great-grandfather, and great-grandson; to the Kid, brother-in-law, grandfather, and great-great-grandfather; to Caddy, he is grandfather, great-grandfather, and brother-in-law; to his own wife he is grandfather and grandson, and great-grandfather and great-grandson; to his own child, by Angie, he is great-grandfather and nephew; to Shorty's child, by Kate, he is grandfather, great-grandfather, and great-great-grandfather and brother-in-law; to the Kid's child he is great-grandfather, great-great-grandfather, and uncle; the old man's wife Angie is her own grandmother and granddaughter; she is Shorty's step-mother, daughter-in-law, great-grandmother, and great-granddaughter; to Kate she is daughter, mother-in-law, great-grandmother, and great-granddaughter; to the Kid she is sister-in-law, step-sister, grandmother, and great-great-grandmother; to Angie she is sister, grandmother, and great-grandmother; to herself she is grandmother and granddaughter, great-grandmother and great-granddaughter; to her own child she is great-grandmother and niece; to Shorty's child, by Kate, she is grandmother, great-great-grandmother, great-grandmother, and half-sister; to the Kid's child she is grandmother, great-great-grandmother, and aunt.

CHARLEY BURWICK (THE "KID").

The Kid is his own great-uncle, his grandmother's brother; since his father is his great-grandfather he must be his own grandfather and grandson; he bears the same relationship to his wife, and is also her step-brother; he is Shorty's son, son-in-law, great-grandson, and uncle; he is the old man's grandson, great-great-grandson, brother-in-law, and great-uncle; he is Kate's step-son, son-in-law, uncle, and great-grandson; he is Angie's step-brother, brother-in-law, grandson, great-grandson, and great-uncle; to the old man's son he is nephew; he is nephew to his father's brother and uncle; he is uncle to his sister's child; to Shorty's child he is half-brother, brother-in-law, grandson, and great-uncle, as he is uncle to Shorty, and grand-nephew; to Shorty's child he is half-brother, grandson, and great-uncle; to his own child he is great-grandfather and second cousin, because the Kid's child is cousin to the Kid's uncle. The Kid's wife, Caddy, is her own great-aunt, grandmother, and granddaughter; she bears the same relations to her husband, and is also her step-sister; she is Shorty's step-daughter, daughter-in-law, great-granddaughter and aunt; she is the old man's granddaughter, great-great-granddaughter, sister-in-law, and great-aunt; she is her mother's daughter-in-law, aunt, and great-granddaughter; she is Angie's sister, granddaughter, great-granddaughter, and great-aunt; to the old man's son by Angie she is niece and aunt; to Shorty's child she is sister-in-law, granddaughter, and great-aunt; to her own child she is great-grandmother and second cousin.

THE CHILDREN OF EACH.

Their relationships to each of the Shortys and their wives have already been given. I will give their relationships to one another. Shorty's son by Kate is nephew and uncle to the old man's son by Angie; he is uncle and nephew to himself; to the Kid's son he is uncle and nephew, so he must be his own nephew and uncle. The old man's son is nephew and uncle to Shorty's son, and cousin and uncle to the Kid's son; the Kid's son is the old man's son's nephew and cousin and grand-nephew and Shorty's son's nephew and uncle.

Well, boys how is this for high?

Cut it out and paste it in the top of your hats, and when you want to get dizzy and haven't got any money, read it.

The reading of it nearly paralyzed the company who had assembled to congratulate this extraordinary family at the reception of the babies, and many refused to believe it until they worked it out for themselves.

Well, now we have them married and settled down in good earnest, although the idea of either Shorty or the Kid's settling down will probably not be taken in by the reader who has known them so well and so long.

But, to tell the truth, they did feel a trifle more like sober men than they hitherto had, and yet years or circumstances had but little to do with them one way or another.

The reader knows this.

Shorty and the Kid got their heads together.

"We won't have it!" said Shorty.

"Nix!" replied the Kid, savagely.

"We'll have some fun!"

"Yer bet!"

"How?"

"I'll catch on."

"Telephone me?"

"Cert."

And with this understanding we will let the curtain drop.

CHAPTER XV.

WELL, we have got the Shortys married and settled down, sure enough.

by the difference in weight, and never allowed a day to pass without carefully weighing them and keeping a written note of it.

It was not far from this time that Shorty, while driving out one day, had the misfortune to run over a man who foolishly attempted to run across the street ahead of his team.

The next instant a policeman seized the bridle of his horses and put him under arrest, while the man was hurried to the station-house.

It was rough on the poor man, and also rough on Shorty, who was taken directly to the police station and locked up. He wanted to send for his friends, but the officer on duty said no. It would be time enough for that when he went to court.

There was no help for it, and he had to wait there

dad's body servant, but I haven't seen him in a long time."

"But what does he mean by sugar?"

"I'll try an' find out, judge. But he doesn't seem to be broken up much," said Shorty, looking at Ho Sham, who was capering around as lively as a mouse.

"Me allie hunkly doly," he kept saying.

"Soy, Ho, what's yer racket, anyway?"

"Gittie lun lover," he replied, honestly.

"Got run over? That isn't what I mean."

"Gittie lun lover leasy."

"Run over easy!"

"So be."

"Oh, come off, an' tell us what you mean."

"No workie."

"Well?"



His baby weighed a pound and a quarter more than Shorty's, and Shorty's weighed a half a pound more than that of the Kid, so by simply weighing them and consulting his note-book, he fixed things.

The babies were christened and they had their reception, somewhat against the wishes of Shorty and the Kid, but the whole thing was settled, and the family settled down!

"The Shortys married and settled down!" It doesn't seem possible, does it? But boys cannot always be boys, you know, and ever since we have been acquainted with the three Shortys, they have been nothing but boys to us, of course.

And yet it would hardly be telling the truth to say that they were positively settled, even though they were married. It was true enough of the old man, but Shorty and the Kid, while they felt a little more like men, did not and could not settle down to save their necks.

The old man used to talk to them often in this fashion:

"Now, boys, it is time to stop all nonsense and behave like men. You have lived long enough to brace up now, and leave nonsense to people who have no children; only stop a moment to think of it. You are both of you parents, and isn't it time to sober up?"

"Nonsense! Wait 'til I've been a dad as long as you've been, then I'll drop," replied Shorty.

"Yes, when I get ter be a great grand-pop, I'll take a tumble same's you do," put in the Kid.

"But I tell you it is only right; it is only justice to your wives and little ones."

"Oh, give us a rest!"

"Come off!" said they, and put an end to the lecture by leaving him alone.

"Well," sighed the old man, "all I can do is to set them a good example," and then he went upstairs to weigh the babies.

He was even more particular about this now than ever, for there was no knowing when Shorty might not take it into his head to mix them up again as he had done once before. But he could always tell them

for an hour or more before being taken to court, where he was arraigned on the charge of reckless driving and confronted with his victim.

He proved to be a Chinaman.

The moment their eyes met they recognized each other.

"What! Ho Sham?" exclaimed Shorty.

"Oh! Shorty—Shorty—Shorty! Allie yittle—me no skleal," replied the delighted Chinaman, holding out his hand to his old friend.

It will be remembered that Ho Sham was the old man's body servant during the trip of the Shortys around the world, and it will also be remembered that he was continually the victim of Shorty and the Kid, who played all sorts of practical jokes with him. But fortune had evidently made a dead set against him, and he was looking very seedy.

"Why, Ho, old man, did I run over you?"

"Allie yittle, me no care; me allie hunkie doly," exclaimed he, evidently delighted even at being run over by his little old friend.

"Are yer hurt much?"

"Me no; me jobbie."

"Job?"

"Allie yittle; me workie racket."

"What do you mean by working a racket?" asked Shorty, while the court listened attentively.

"Gittie no workie."

"Well?"

"Workie racket."

"How? What do you mean?"

"Gittie lun lover."

"Get run over?" asked the magistrate.

"Allie samie, flor shuglar."

"What does he mean?" asked the court, addressing Shorty.

"Hang me if I know, yer honor. He used to be my

"No gittie."

"Well?"

"Deadie blust."

"Well?"

"Gittie lun lover," said he, as though that explained the whole business.

"Get out! What der yer get run over for?"

"Monie," he replied in his squeaky voice.

"For money?"

"So be."

"Do you catch on, judge?" Shorty asked, turning to the court.

"No, hang me if I do."

"Soy, how is it, anyway?" said Shorty, catching hold of the delighted Chinaman.

"Allie bloke lup," said he, indicating the condition of his wardrobe.

"Well, rather rusty."

"No workie."

"Yer said that before."

"Allie likie tramp."

"Yes, somewhat. Go on."

"Gittie lun lover," said he, as though finally.

"Oh, go to the devil!"

"So be allie time."

"But how about money and getting run over?"

"Gittie lun lover an' monie pay."

"Oh, ho!" exclaimed the court.

"Ah, ha!" chimed in Shorty.

"I tumble."

"I hook on, judge. He makes a business of getting run over for what he can make out of it," and both Shorty and the judge laughed heartily, as did those in the courtroom.

"So be," said Ho Sham, honestly.

"Judge, that snatches the bun."

"Yea, that takes the cake. I thought I had found out all the crooked ways of this world, and the rack-

ets of crooked men, but getting run over for a living beats me; that is entirely new," said the judge.

"That downs yer uncle, judge."

"And yet we Anglo-Saxons claim to be a superior race! We claim to be the most ingenious people on earth, and yet I dare be sworn that nobody but a Chinaman would ever have thought of getting a living by being run over. Mr. Burwick, you are discharged."

"Thank you, judge."

"But what am I to do with this—what is his name?"

"Ho Sham."

"Ho Sham! Well, he was named all right for his business, at all events. But what shall I do with him?"

"Lemme have him, judge."

was delighted at finding him, even if he did get knocked down in doing it.

Shorty laughed as he thought of the many rackets he had had with Ho Sham, and the fun of his present occupation, but taking him to a Russian bath, he did not leave until he saw him put through a cleansing process which goes almost more than skin deep.

It nearly took the breath of life out of him, but Shorty kept yelling at the attendants who were putting him through not to let up on him a bit, but to give it to him the best they knew how.

He wore a woe-begone look when they got through with him, but a far more wholesome one than before. Some Orientals take to the water naturally, but Chinamen do not. In fact, they take to dirt much more naturally than to anything cleansing.

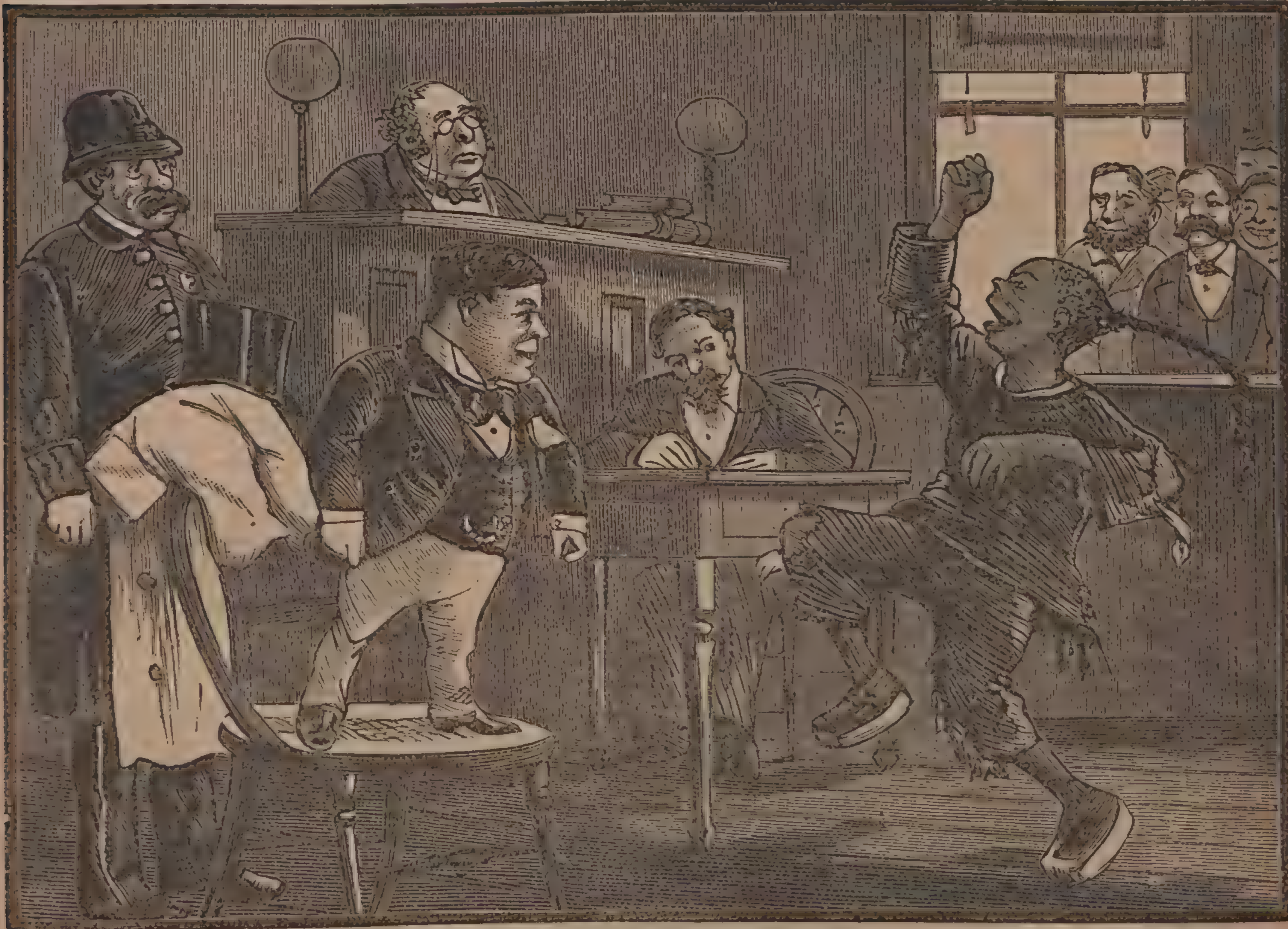
himself, probably because he wanted to get all he could for his money.

The trousers were too short, but what they lacked in length they certainly made up in breadth, for they were awfully baggy, and the coat was so short that it gave a fine display of the bagginess of the pantaloons.

Altogether he looked quite as comical as he would have looked in his Oriental toga, but he was satisfied, and more too.

"Allie yitie; me allie flit, so be. Me heavy swell now allie samie likie mashie man," he cried, capering around.

"What shall I do with your old clothes?" asked the clerk, smiling at the rusties that he had taken off, and



The moment their eyes met they recognized each other. "What! Ho Sham?" exclaimed Shorty. "Oh! Slorty—Slorty!" Allie yitie—me no skleal," replied the delighted Chinaman, holding out his hand to his old friend.

"What are you going to do with him? Keep him to practice running over with?"

"No, judge. I'll take him up ter ther Russian baths an' put him in soak for awhile, then I'll tog him up an' take him home."

"Me no, me no!" exclaimed Ho Sham, manifesting much resentment.

"What! don't want ter go home with me?"

"So be, allee yitie."

"Well, what are you kickin' 'bout?"

"Me no soakie."

"Oh, yer don't want ter soak yerself?"

"Me no —"

"All right. Give him a year, judge," said Shorty, winking at the court.

"Oh, me no —"

"Yes. I'll send him up for attempting to run over your horses."

"That's it."

"Me no, me no!" protested the Chinaman.

"And when they get you up at the Penitentiary they will keep you in soak for a month," said the judge, taking up his pen.

"No, no, me no Slorty," he said, turning appealingly to Shorty.

"Well, will you go and take a bath?"

"So be, me go allee yitie."

"Let him go, judge, but if he don't soak yer may send him up."

"Very well. Now see that you obey this man, for if you don't, I'll send you to prison for a year," said the judge, severely.

"Me allie hunkie doly."

"See that you are. Come and see me again, Mr. Burwick, whenever you run over a man," the judge said, as he waved Shorty away.

"So I will, judge. So long!" and out of the court he raddled, followed by the grinning Chinaman, who

"Well, how do yer feel now?" asked Shorty.

"Allie bloke lup," he moaned.

"All washed up, yer mean."

"Washie allee hottie, then ahie cole water."

"That's all right. They oughter put yer in a big kettle and biled yer."

"So did, then chuckle lak cold water, freezie damie legs loff."

"Now go an get some new toga."

"Whatie?"

"New harness. Here, take this money an' get yer a good make-up," said he, handing him a fifty-dollar bill.

"Oh, bullie! bullie!" he exclaimed, hopping up and down in his delight.

"Go get togged out, an' meet me here as quick as yer can. Want ter take yer home an' show yer ter the ole man; he'll be awful glad ter see yer."

"Me ho, me hi, me hoopla!"

"Hurry up."

"Me skipple likie kitty-cat," said he, taking the money and starting at a run for the nearest clothing store.

Shorty watched him out of sight, all the while laughing at the sport he hoped to have.

To say that Ho Sham was a delighted Chinaman would only be putting it mildly, for he was more than that.

When he had selected and put on a new suit of clothes, he began to caper about the store, to the delight of the clerks who had been piping him off ever since he entered, and as for the clothes themselves, they would have fitted anybody quite as well as they did him.

The clerk who waited upon him wanted to sell him something that fitted him better, but no. He had his own ideas of how clothes ought to fit, as every Chinaman has, and so he got them all a mile too big for

calculating whether an Italian rag-picker would notice them if he should throw them into the street.

"Me no clare. Glive to poor man," replied Ho Sham, loftily.

"Well, I'm afraid I shan't be able to find anybody poor enough to accept them. Are you sure there is no money left in the pockets?"

"No, me plick allee lout. Me no classie foolie, hop," he replied, and then paying for the new clothes, he tripped out of the store amid a roar of laughter by the clerks, and started away to join Shorty.

The joker was waiting for him with another laugh, although Ho Sham had no idea what he was laughing at, but had Shorty picked out the clothes himself he couldn't have been more pleased with the way they fitted him.

But in order to complete the outfit, he had to have a pair of wooden shoes and a new plug hat, and these were speedily procured, after which Shorty took him to a picture gallery and had a tin-type made of him.

I have a copy of it in my possession, and anybody who wishes to see one of the most comical pictures out can have the privilege of doing so.

Well, after Shorty had got him fixed up to suit his taste, he proceeded to take him home with him, although he kept him out of sight at first, resolving on a little surprise.

So he put him into the park and went in search of the old man and the Kid, at the same time telling him what he was going to do, and how he wanted him to behave.

"Soy, lada, come down-stairs and see the new coachman I've got," said he.

"New coachman! Why, what ails Peter?" demanded the old man in surprise.

"Pete, he's goin' ter skin out."

"What for?"

"Goin' ter marry inter ther Astor family," replied Shorty, winking at the Kid.

"What nonsense is this?"

"Nix. But I've got a bully boy for ther place, so come down and see him."

"Where is he?"

"In the parlor."

"What! a coachman in the parlor?"

"Cert. It won't make him proud."

"What an absurdity," replied the old man, laying down his paper and following Shorty and the Kid down stairs.

Reaching the parlor door Shorty threw it open, and there stood Ho Sham in the attitude of a dancer, poised on one foot and his arms above his head.

Both the old man and the Kid started back in surprise, for neither of them recognized him at first.

"What is it?" asked the Kid.

"Makie two likie this flor korter," said Ho, after a moment's silence.

Shorty roared, and the puzzled old man went nearer to the strange being in the awfully-fitting clothes and new plug hat.

"Allie yittle—how be?" he asked, holding out his hand to his old master.

"What! Ho Sham?"

"Bettie you allie timie."

"Well, I'll be hanged! Where did you come from, for goodness sake?"

"Me allie hunkle doly; me gettie lun lover."

"Get run over!"

"So be, Shorty. How be?" he added, whirling himself around for inspection.

"Goin' ter start a show, pop?" asked the Kid.

"In the name of goodness, where did you get that suit of clothes?"

"Shorty. Shorty bully bloy."

"Look here, George, where did you find him, and what is the meaning of all this?" asked the old man, turning to Shorty.

Thereupon the delighted runt proceeded to recount the whole adventure, during which Ho Sham was grinning and posturing before the big, full-length mirror, evidently in love with himself more than ever before.

"Well, I'm glad to see him, but what do you propose to do with him now?" asked the old man, looking at Ho.

"Me mashee now allee samee likee Bloodlay swell-lee," put in Ho.

"Yes, you do look very much like a masher, that's a fact. But what are you going to do with him, George?"

"Take him inter ther family."

"Bully!" exclaimed the Kid, who evidently saw at a glance what fun there could be got out of Ho Sham in connection with the other assortment of servants already in the house.

"What nonsense!"

"Keep him for a general waiter."

"But Ginger holds that position already."

"All right; but Ginge's getting round-shouldered 'cause he has so much ter do."

"Cert," chimed in the Kid.

"What arrant nonsense," protested the old man.

"Take him back as yer valet."

"I don't want a valet."

"Well, I do; I'm actually suff'rin' for a valley," said the Kid.

"Of course he is. Besides, dad, only think of the fun we'll have," added Shorty, aside.

"Oh, undoubtedly. That was your object in getting him into this outlandish togger and bringing him here. But I think we have all the elements of fun already in the house that is consistent with the dignity of families," protested the old man.

"Nixy; we must have Ho Sham."

"Me allie hunkle doly, allie samie likie used to be," put in Ho, who evidently saw that the old man was not in favor of his becoming a member of the household.

"Yes, I presume you are; but that is just what I object to. These fellows will be at you just as they used to, and you are too big a fool to see it."

"Oh, go take a tumble!" said Shorty.

"Yes, go jump on yourself. We're goin' ter have Ho Sham back with us," said the Kid.

"All right; but understand he is no servant of mine. I refuse to sanction his coming," said the old man, going from the room in a huff.

"Oh, yer gettin' too good ter live," replied Shorty; and then he proceeded to introduce Ho Sham to the other servants, and to install him as a member of the household.

A new factor of fun had entered the Shorty home! Ginger Jones was inclined to resent his coming, and as for Biddy, the cook, she nearly went wild at the thought of a "hathin" becoming her fellow servant.

"Luck at him!" she cried. "What der yer call it afore it's cooked?" she said to Ginger.

"Miss Bridget, I don't like it. It am an insult to our respectability," he replied.

"So it is; but luck at him. Isn't he a comical-lookin' crater?" and in spite of her indignation she laughed loud and heartily.

Ho Sham suspected that he had made a mash the first thing.

CHAPTER XVI.

Yes, our old friend Ho Sham was now a member of the Shorty household.

You remember the outlandish togger that Shorty got him into before he took him home, after running over him, and being arrested on his account, and you probably also remember the fun that Shorty and the Kid used to have with him during their trip around the world.

His ridiculous and comical appearance caused no end of laughter among the other servants and the wives of the family, but Ho Sham took it all in good part, actually believing that it was all on account of his good looks and new clothes; indeed, he thought himself simply a masher, and all the women folks in love with him.

"He, he, he!" he laughed, as he stood looking at Biddy, the cook, who was convulsed with laughter at his comical appearance; "how be?" and he whirled around to enable her to get a better look at his togger, of which he was so proud.

"How be! Put the blazes do yees mane by that?" she demanded.

"Me hi-pl, eh?"

"Hoigh poie! Faix, I'd say yer hoigh puddin' by yer looks."

"Blig giast, eh?"

Biddy burst out laughing again.

"Me hunkly doley, bettie you."

"Begorra, but yer the swatest specimin av ould Nick that iver I seen."

"Eh? So be. Me likie you too, he, he, he!" and he grinned at her from ear to ear.

"Yer loike me! Well, then, the loikin's all on wan side, so it is. Where did ther boss foind yer any way?"

"Uppie townie."

"Oh, he did, hoy? I didn't know but that he got yees out av a museum. But sure an' they wouldn't part wid such a great curiosity as ye are, I guess."

"Me olie timie, so be."

"Old Timie. Is that what your name is?"

"So be. Me one bloys, allie samie likie Melican man. Me hi ho hoopla!" and he danced a few steps on the kitchen floor.

"Howly Moses! Sure it can dance!"

"Me onie glang, so be."

"Troth, I shud soy yees war wan av ther gang, but I guess it wud puzzle an alderman ter tell what gang it was."

"Me workle flor olie manie heap while."

"An' fut's that?"

"Me olie man siervant allie while go lound world. Have muchie glood-timie. Olie man lun lover in streetie lun takle backle allie slame makle bloss of honsie, so be."

"Make yer ther boss av ther house? Begorra, we'll see about that. Ho, Ginge! come down here a bit," she called.

"Havie glood timie likie damie. Me makle lovie to lu, lu makle lovie to me—he, he, he!" and he laughed and danced again.

Ginger Jones, frowning and indignant at the introduction of the Chinaman into the household, entered the room at this moment.

"Der yer moind it, Ginger?" asked Biddy, pointing to Ho Sham. "Sure it can dance."

"So can monkeys," replied Ginger.

"Me blully bloy, so be."

"An' fut der yer think he says?"

"De lord only know, Bridget."

"He says he's ter be ther boss av us?"

"De boss!" exclaimed Ginger.

"So be," replied Ho.

"Did you iver hear ther loiks av that?"

"Mr. Sham, you's too fresh."

"Me no fleshy now. No good eatie. Have heap now an' glet fatie allie goodie," replied Ho Sham, gleefully, mistaking Ginger's word "fresh" for flesh, and reveling in anticipation of the good things in store for him.

"Did yees iver hear such jargon, Ginger?"

"Dat am de wuss dat I ever hear. But one thing I wants yer to understan', Mr. Sham, dar'll somefin dreful happen you if you come around me wid any of your nonsense," he added, turning savagely upon him.

"An' moind that same from me, bad luck ter yer pig eyes an' pig tail," said Biddy.

"Me allie solid with bloss. So be."

"Bejabers, but I'll make yees all solid wid the coroner if yer try ter boss me."

"Me no bloss lu; me makle lovie to lu."

"Then, begorra, I'll kill yer onyhow."

"We must get rid of him, Miss Bridget, or he will make trouble," said Ginger.

"Faith, an' if I get at him once he'll be moighty glad ter go out av this. So he will. I'll hang him by his pig tail, so I will, bad luck ter ther outlandish spalpeen," and involuntarily she seized the potato-masher.

"It am my deliberate opinion, Miss Bridget, dat Shorty brugg him heah on purpose fo' too hab fun wid."

"All roight; let him put him in a cage an' have fun wid him, but if he allows him ter run around loose, I'll give notice av my acquittance av this place, so I will, an' I'll tell them so."

"An' I'll do de same thing," said Ginger.

"An' so will all the servants; sure, if they want wan hathin, let em get all hathins."

"I agree wid you mose' circumlocutionly," said Ginger, with much haughtiness; indeed, that big word was enough to make him swell up like a turkey-cock.

"Me goodie bloy," protested Ho, who evidently saw that he was not a favorite.

"Good by!" and Biddy roared loudly.

"So be," and then he smiled on her a ravishing, seductive smile that made her clutch at the potato-masher again.

"Good for what?" asked Ginger.

"Bloss waiters," he replied, innocently.

"Git out! You'll boss nobody heah, an' don't you so'get it," and just then the front door bell rang, and Ginger ran up stairs to answer it, leaving Ho Sham and Biddy alone together.

"What der yer want here?" she asked, savagely.

"Makle love to lu, te, he, he!"

"Bad luck ter yer, git out av this!" she yelled, and

seizing the potato-masher, she went for that Oriental masher like a tigress.

"Hi, ho hippie!" exclaimed Ho Sham, but he only waited long enough to get one tap of that masher, and turning tail, he flew up the basement stairs as though the sister of the evil one was after him.

"Bad manners ter yer! If I iver catch yer down here again, I'll make a hathin funeral av yees, so I will!" she called after him.

Shorty happened to be in the hall as Ho Sham came flying and yelling up the kitchen-stairs, frightened half out of his life.

"Hello, what's up?" he asked.

"Me up, so be," he replied, with a deal of thankfulness in his voice, for he evidently was thankful that he had escaped.

"What's ther matter?"

"Blazie down kitchie."

"Who, Biddy?"

"So be."

"What did she do?"

"Me makle lovie and she pounle cussie head lof, hap."

"Well, that's all right," said Shorty, and the bewildered Chinaman looked at him in surprise, and as though wholly unable to understand why it was all right.

"You had no business ter make love ter Biddy. She's ther coon's mash."

"Mashie wholly headle lof," he mused, as he thoughtfully rubbed the nob which the indignant Irish girl had raised upon his head with the potato-masher.

"Yer mustn't do it, Ho."

"Me bloss allie waiters?"

"No, not yet. But if yer want ter make love ter Bid yer must cut out ther coon. Get her dead struck on yer."

"Me gnessie no. She debel. So be."

"I'll fix that. Take a duster and dust everything around," saying which he went down into the kitchen where the irate cook was still muttering to herself.

"Hello, Bid!"

"Hello yerself an' see how yer loike it. I'll give yer notice av my lavin' yer," she replied.

"What for?"

"Wasn't ther nager bad enough?"

"For what?"

"Ter have for a boss."

"But he don't try ter boss yer now."

"No, bad luck ter him, an' I'd loike ter see ther man ud do it, save the wan as hires an' pays me."

"Well, that's all right."

"But now yer bring a hathin wid a pig's tail growin' ter his head ter do it."

"No, I don't."

"Sure, but he said so."

"All wrong, an' I just told him so. He used to be with us. I found him dead broke, and took him in for a scullion, that's all. But here is ther point, Bid. You like fun as well as I do. He'll never bother you again, and if you put up with him for the sake of the fun we can get out of him an' Ginge, you shall have two dollars more a month, and all ther laugh yer want. We'll keep up a rivalry between him an' Ginge, and have gobs of fun out of it. See?"

Biddy was touched in a tender spot, and very soon began to laugh.

"Catch on?" he asked again.

"Faith I do, thin. But ther comical blackguard began ter wunst ter make love to me, bad manners to him."

"That's all right. He thinks every woman that looks at him is mashed."

"Begorra, an' I guess he thinks that I'm as good a masher as he is," she replied, pointing to the potato-masher which she had used upon his head.

"That's all right. But put up with him, an' we'll have slathers of fun. He'll be very respectful ter yer now."

"So he'd best be."

"But don't be too rough on him, will yer now?" he asked, coaxingly.

"No, I won't," she replied, frankly; and then Shorty left her.

Meantime Ho Sham had fallen into a meditative mood. That bang on the head had made him serious. The soft thing he thought he had fallen into did not appear to be half so nice as it had an hour ago.

Shorty found him dusting the furniture of the dining-room with a shoe-brush, but he let him keep right on while he went for Ginger Jones, who was sulking in the front entry.

"What's ther matter, Ginge?"

"Sah, I's been insulted."

"Who did it?"

"I supposed dat I war de boss ob all de servants an' de house, but you's been an' hire a Chinnerman in my place."

"Nonsense; I brought him here ter have fun with. See?"

"Am dat so?" he asked, brightening up.

"Cert."

"Amn't he my boss?"

"Nixy. You're ther same's ever. But you must humor Ho Sham, an' get along with him ther best yer can. Just come in here, an' see how nicely he's dustin' ther dinin'-room," said Shorty, leading the way.

As they entered Ho was rubbing up the silver coffee urn with the shoe-brush.

"See how handy he is?" asked Shorty.

"Fo' de Lor!" exclaimed Ginger, throwing up his hands and laughing loudly.

"Niggie heap tickle, guess," remarked Ho.

"Dat takes de pot!"

"Don't yer catch on now?"

"But he scratch dat silver all up."

"That's so. Hold on, Ho. Don't bother with that any more; try yer hand on ther blower an' fender."

said Shorty; and pleased with what he thought was an acknowledgment of his ability, the Chinaman obeyed orders, and began polishing those articles.

Ginger Jones was delighted, not only at the prospect of having some fun with the new servant, but because he found that he was not to be superseded by him. But he knew that he would have to watch him closely, or he would be liable to do much damage.

"Here, Ho, this is your boss; he'll tell yer what ter do," said Shorty.

"Niggie, bloss?"

"Yes; an' yer must mind him when we don't tell yer what ter do."

"Allie yitie," said he, meekly. "Niggie heap tickle," he muttered to himself.

And so it will be seen that Shorty had things all arranged for whatever might come up in the future, although he had done so without consulting any other member of the family.

But it soon became evident that he had made a hit, so far as fun for the whole family was concerned, and the other servants, too, for that matter, for Ho was continually doing all sorts of odd and comical things, sometimes annoying, but almost always funny enough to raise a laugh.

The old man did not like the arrangement very well, partially because he was so taken up with the babies, and partially because he feared some damage might be done; but he gradually warmed up to the business, and enjoyed it the same as he used to when Ho Sham had been his body servant.

He kicked, however, when, one day, he found Ho Sham cleaning the front windows with a brick, rubbing away industriously according to the instructions he had received from Biddy, and threatened to fire him out.

But Shorty contrived to make it all right, although he had to have three or four new panes of glass put in in the place of those that Ho had scratched so badly with the brick.

But what was that to him so long as a good laugh could be gotten out of the business?

It was now Christmas time, and everybody was preparing for it as industriously as only New Yorkers can do, and of course the Burwick family were not a whit behind. Indeed, the old man commenced to buy presents for the wives and babies a month before time, so anxious was he to manifest his happiness.

And once more it was the season of amusement, or, rather, the season was at its height, and again there was talk of private theatricals, although it was agreed to vary them from what they had been last season.

Shorty, however, was aching for a racket. He hadn't enjoyed a regular old-fashioned one for some time, and so he and the Kid got their heads together to see what could be worked up.

"Work 'em together," suggested the Kid.

"How?" asked Shorty.

"Well, some Christmas biz."

"Theatrical snap?"

"Yes."

"Good, but not tough enough. Can't we work ther ole man in?"

"Wish we could."

"No, not this time. I have it."

"Where?"

Shorty tapped upon his forehead.

"B. B.," said the Kid.

"Don't forget it."

"How is it workin'?"

"This way. You take Ginge an' tell him that Ho Sham's got up a job on him; that he's goin' ter dress himself up like a goblin ter frighten ther life out of him. Ah! I've got it!" he suddenly exclaimed, as a new idea struck him.

"Got it again?"

"Hush! We'll work it this way. Get ther old man feelin' good an' make him dress up like a ghost ter frighten ther life out of Ho Sham. Then you take Ginge an' tell him that Ho Sham is goin' ter play a trick on him, tryin' ter frighten him by playin' ghost. I'll take Ho Sham an' tell him that Ginge is goin' ter play a trick on him in ther ghost business, an' for him ter knock ther life out of him with a stuffed club."

"Well?"

"Don't yer catch on?"

"Not yet."

"Well, they'll both think ther ole man ther duffer that's playin' ghost."

"I hook on now. He'll be ther gob."

"Cert. But Ginge'll think it's Ho Sham, an' Ho Sham'll think it's Ginge."

"Good snap!"

"But we must get two stuffed clubs."

"I can work it."

"Where?"

"Why, der prop man at Tony Pastor's."

"Cert."

"He'll get us up a couple, sure."

"That's all right; see him."

"Don't forget I will."

"An' I'll work up ther ole man."

"Good 'nough!"

And the job was thus worked up between them, at the expense of the old man, as usual.

You wouldn't hardly believe it, but the old man fell right into the trap, being almost always ready to plat a trick on Ginger Jones.

Ginger, in the meantime, was given one of the stuffed clubs that had been made for the purpose, and quietly informed that Ho Sham intended to frighten him out of the house that night by appearing to him as a ghost, and Shorty told the same thing to Ho Sham; at the same time giving him the other stuffed club, and telling him to club the life out of the coon, just to show him that he couldn't fool with him on any such racket as that.

And so the two rival servants were fixed for each

other, each one believing that he had the drop on the other.

The more the old man thought it over, the more he liked the idea of frightening Ginger Jones, and, to make it all the more funny, he had an understanding with the three wives, who knew all about it, and were to be where they could see the fun.

And so were Shorty and the Kid.

The scare was to come off at about midnight, in the dining-room; and the old man had it all arranged with Shorty to have Ginger there on some pretext or other, so that the thing could be worked advantageously to all concerned.

And of course Ho Sham was instructed in his part, and was on hand in another place, for the benefit of the conspirators.

The old man got himself up in the most ghostly style, and at a given signal strode into the room.

Ginger Jones was there with his club. He went for him. He clubbed the ghost all out of him in the eighth part of a minute, and then came in Ho Sham, thinking he was going to mash the coon in no time, and the way they did punish that poor old ghost was a caution to shrouds.

"Murder, murder!" cried the old man, trying to escape from Ho Sham and Ginger Jones. "Help, help!"

The wives who had come to see the sport now rushed in to his rescue, as did Shorty and the Kid, pretending innocence.

But by this time both Ginger and Ho Sham saw the mistake they had made, and you bet they lit out of that in short order.

"What does it mean?" cried the wives.

"Are you hurt?"

"There has been a mistake," said Shorty's wife, dreadfully anxious on the old man's account, for she didn't know the clubs were stuffed ones.

"No mistake at all," said the old man, bracing up, for he was not badly hurt.

"No mistake!" exclaimed his wife.

"Not at all, it was a job."

"A job!"

"Yes, by these rascals!" said he, pointing to Shorty and the Kid, who were laughing by this time as hard as they could.

"Heavens and earth!" exclaimed the old man's wife, and then they all went for the runty jokers.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE racket was a terrible sell on the old man, as it was on both Ho Sham and Ginger Jones, each of whom had mistaken him for a ghost and clubbed him, supposing he was either the Chinaman or the coon; but he was not materially hurt.

But oh, how mad he was!

Mad? Well, mad was hardly the name for it.

There he had been and invited his own wife as well as the wives of Shorty and the Kid to see him play a ghost racket on Ginger Jones, and after all Shorty had put up a job so that both Ginger and Ho Sham had mistaken him, one for the other, and had clubbed him nearly out of his boots.

Of course Ginger and Ho had got out just as quick as they discovered their mistake, and only the jokers and the wives remained in the dining-room when the whole thing came out.

"This is infamous!" cried the old man.

"It is dreadful," put in his wife.

"And those rascals worked it," said he, pointing again to Shorty and the Kid.

"Me! I worked nothing," said Shorty.

"Me too," chirruped the Kid.

"I know better. Didn't you coax me to play the ghost business on Ginger?"

"Well?"

"Didn't you play it?" asked the Kid, laughing.

"You young Hessians! I will make you rue this piece of business!" he howled.

But by this time the ridiculousness of the thing dawned upon the wives, and in spite of themselves they had to laugh.

"Oh, yes, laugh! All of you laugh! It is very funny, isn't it?" he snarled.

"But how could they have made such a dreadful mistake?" asked Shorty's wife.

"Mistake! Confound it, there was no mistake about it," growled the old man, as he continued to rub his bruised parts.

"But there *must* have been."

"Must have been!"

"Certainly, pop, or how did it happen that they beat you so soundly?" asked the Kid's wife.

"I tell you that it was a put-up job by those runty rascallions."

"That's right; lay everything to us," protested Shorty, trying to look hurt.

"Of course I will, for you are guilty and I know it. You put me up to frightening Ginger in the ghost business, and you probably went to him and told him (indeed, he said so) that Ho Sham was to act the part of ghost and set him up to club the supposed Chinaman, while you undoubtedly told Ho that Ginger was going to try to frighten him, and for him to do the same thing. Consequently, they both fell upon me and I got knocked out."

"Oh, Shorty! Is it possible?" asked his wife.

"Of course it is possible," said the old man. "He is always up to just such things, and has no more feeling than to play them upon his old father," and the old man whined his indignation.

"It was simply an outrage," protested Angelina, his wife.

"So it was," added Shorty.

"Cert," chirruped the Kid.

"Oh, you fellows, shut up. I'll get even with you to pay for this. See if I don't."

"No, no, don't you attempt anything of the kind," said his wife.

"Why not?" he demanded, angrily.

"Because you always get the worst of it whenever you attempt anything of the kind."

"I do. Hey? I'll show you whether I do or not. They have no business to play their scurvy tricks on me, and hang me if I don't get even with them if it takes a year to do it in."

"Why! Soy, it warn't us; it was der coon an' der John as done it," said the Kid.

"Bah! do you suppose they would have dared to club me that way if they had really known who they were clubbing? No, sir," and unable longer to suppress his indignation, he started for his parlor, followed by his wife.

Of course the others remained behind to laugh, and in the meantime Ginger and Ho Sham were talking the matter over between them.

"By golly, we get frow'd out ob de house for dat, shuah."

"So be, s'pose. Slorty flob, s'pect?"

"Dat war a put up job by dem scallawags fo cartin. Neber seen nuffin like em."

"Heap full debel alle tittle. Usle plut lup flob lon me alle samle likie debil. Blad legs, so be, alle samle likie heap blig cussle."

"Neber seen nuffin like em in all my bone days. Dey don't gib nobody no rest no time. But de ole man, he bounce us plum out, fo shuah."

"Bounce?"

"Don't fo'get dat he will."

"Gland shakle?"

"You bet it will be a gone shook."

"Slorty makie cussie flob, so be."

"Ob cose he make a cussed fool ob us, but what we gwane to do 'bout it?"

"Me glib lup," replied Ho, shrugging his shoulders.

"Golly, I gib it up, too."

"Blig lacket, hey?"

"Racket!" groaned Ginger, and then the miserable servants retired to their quarters, fully believing that that night would be their last under the Shortys' roof, although they both felt innocent of any intentional harm.

Shorty and the Kid, together with their wives, laughed themselves to sleep that night, for to them it had been one of the funniest rackets they had worked in a long time.

They had been hungry for a snap of that very kind, and now that they had got it, they felt contented and happy.

Not so with the old man, however. He felt anything but contented or happy. He felt more like murdering somebody, and kept threatening to get even with his son and grandson.

His wife, however, tried to dissuade him from anything of the kind, knowing from experience that he would be sure to get the worst of it.

But he refused to see it in that light. Never, in all the jokes that they had played upon him, did he feel so confoundedly humiliated, and nothing could turn him from his desire to get square with the jokers, even if it took a year.

He felt a trifle better the next morning when he went down to breakfast, but the laugh with which he was greeted did not make him feel so amiable as he might have felt if nothing had been said about it.

Ginger Jones was at his post of waiter upon the table, but he looked wild and swallowed quick when he saw the old man coming down, for he certainly expected to get fired out then and there.

The old man kept his temper as well as he could, and disappointed Ginger by not discharging him, and after breakfast was over he took the first favorable opportunity to have a private conversation with him.

Ginger was expecting it to come, and had his back humped for a discharge.

"Boss, you musn't blame me fo' dat las' night's business," he began.

"Who is blaming you?"

"Circumstances am agin me, boss, but, fo' de Lord, I didn't know it was you."

"Shorty told you it was Ho Sham you were to slug, didn't he?"

"Cartin shuah, boss."

"And he told Ho Sham that you were going to frighten him by a goblin trick, and got him to club what he supposed to be you, eh?"

"Dat war what he said, sah."

"I thought so. He put up the whole job in the first place. I was fool enough to let him use me in a trick to frighten you. Then he put up the other parts of the job. Now, mind, I don't blame you at all. It would have been a good joke on either you or Ho Sham, but when it was turned on an old man like me, it ceased to be anything like a joke."

"Dat's what I should say, sah."

"Now, will you join me in working a racket on him that will make him sick?"

"Can it be done, sah?"

"To be sure it can. Will you assist me if I can plan something?"

"Cartin, sah, fo' it would sarve him right."

"Of course it would. Nothing makes him so sick as to have a joke played back on him, and I am goin' to do it, you bet."

"Bully fo' you, sah."

"I haven't decided yet what I shall do, but you will assist me at all events?"

"Fo' de Lord, boss, I see wid you."

"All right. Now you keep perfectly quiet and let me work this out. We may need the assistance of Ho Sham, for he used to be my body servant, and I know I can depend upon him. So that is all right, keep mum."

"Sah, I'll be like an oyster."

"Well, don't let him open you."

"I shell not, sah," replied Ginger, grinning broadly over his pun.

"Don't say a word about my conversation with you, and we'll have fun enough at his expense to make him a candidate for a hospital."

With this understanding between them, they separated, and Ginger went about his duties, wearing a smile all over his black mug, not only because of the prospect there was of getting hunk with the little fokers, but because he now felt sure that he was not to be discharged.

He explained matters to Ho Sham the best he could, and he appeared to understand all about it, although in truth, he could make neither head or tail to the business.

However, he promised to say nothing about it to either Shorty or the Kid, and so the matter was left wholly in the hands of the old man to concoct and

"No, nor he won't till he gets even with us," replied the Kid.

"Oh, he'll take a tumble an' let us alone after this. I'll bet he'll drop on it."

This conversation shows how they felt about the matter.

But in the meantime the old man was busily at work on his racket, and one day while Shorty and the Kid were away he had a man working with him in the house putting up wires leading to the various parts of the house from the cellar, and in reply to questions asked by some of the women folks, he said he was having the bell-wires fixed.

They noticed the same man at work about the house on two or three different occasions, but of course paid no particular attention to him, as the old man was

lows sick—perhaps not!" and then to express his feelings still further, he walked on his hands for a while.

This seemed to relieve him, so that when he again made his appearance among the other members of the family, he was as calm as ever, and did not excite suspicion or comment, as he probably would have done had he not thus given vent to his feelings.

Well, that evening, after they had all got around the table, the old man was ready to work his unseen racket.

Shorty and the Kid were in the best of spirits, full of their jokes, grips and quirks, keeping the table in a roar, as they usually did when they felt just like it. Indeed, the old man was in the humor to join in the laughter, and he did so.

"Well, dad, how is ther old thing workin'?" asked



But the old man was not satisfied yet. He touched the knob once more, and again Shorty and the Kid shot up into the air, upsetting the table as before, and falling sprawling amid the ruins.

work out, while they were to hold themselves in readiness to assist him in any way he might direct.

And then the old fellow threw everything else to one side, and placed his giant intellect squarely upon the business of getting a terrible snap upon Shorty and the Kid, for nothing else would fill the measure of his great revenge.

He worked for several days without hitting upon anything satisfactory; but finally he did, and went for it bald-headed.

Meantime Shorty and the Kid were full of laughter over the old man's discomfiture, and otherwise enjoying themselves in their happy-go-lucky sort of a way so natural to them.

But, although the old man had threatened to get square with them, they do not appear to have believed that he really intended to make an attempt to do so.

They concluded that he had had enough of that sort of business; or if he had not, they felt confident that they could turn any of his snaps back upon himself, should he attempt one upon them.

"But, say, I really think he's on it," said the Kid, as he and Shorty were riding through the Park one day not long after the clubbing racket.

"On what?" asked Shorty.

"On a snap."

"I don't catch on."

"Why, I think he's quietly workin' up a job on us."

"Nonsense."

"I think so."

"What makes yer?"

"Why, don't yer see how queer he looks?" Don't yer catch on ter his deep study?"

"Oh, I don't see anything different about him. I guess he hasn't got over his sick spell yet," replied Shorty, laughing.

superintending whatever was being done, and they did not notice that the work was being done entirely in the absence of Shorty and the Kid.

He did not take his wife into his confidence, because she would only have laughed at him for attempting to get even with the boys and tried to dissuade him from doing so.

Indeed, all three of the wives and mothers were so taken up with their babies that they paid but little attention to what was going on outside of the nursery.

Ginger Jones was not taken into his confidence either, as he expected to be, for when he first spoke to him about the matter he had not decided upon any plan of action, but now that he had it nearly arranged, he found that he could work it without help from any

Ginger noticed the good-natured smile upon the old fellow's face, and concluded that he had forgotten all about the rough joke that had been played upon him, and given up his idea of avenging it.

As for Ho Sham, he had gradually worked himself into the household, so that he made himself quite as useful as he was ornamental. But the servants were continually having fun with him, all of which he took in his usual good part. Indeed, he always appeared to have just as much fun in being sold and put about as those who sold him; this was always his way, you know.

Well, the old man's extensive and expensive racket was finally completed, and when he got things all nicely into a working condition, he felt so good that he locked himself into the billiard room, where he proceeded to dance and to stand on his head and cut up all sorts of capers to express his feelings, so good were they.

"Oh, hol I guess not!" he would now and then give utterance to. "Oh, perhaps I won't make them fel-

Shorty, seeing him in much better humor than for a long time past.

"Oh, first-rate!" said he, as he proceeded to eat his supper.

"How's der kids? Gained any meat?" asked the Kid.

"Mine has gained a quarter of a pound since yesterday, but yours has lost an ounce."

It will be remembered that the old man weighed all three of the children every day, not so much to keep run of their growth as to keep a record or their weight, so that Shorty and the Kid could not mix them up, as they had done once before, creating so much unhappiness.

They kept up a fire of squibs at each other until they had got well under way with their supper.

All of a sudden, however, the old man touched a knob with his foot as he sat at the table.

There was a sudden commotion. Shorty and the Kid took a flying leap.

Over went the table.

They rose at least a yard out of their chairs, and yelled murder at the same time.

"What on earth is the matter?" demanded the frightened wives.

"What's up?" asked the old man, pretending to be greatly surprised.

"Gracious! I guess we are up," said Shorty, picking himself from the floor where he had fallen.

"Moses! what is it?" asked the Kid, gathering himself up with difficulty.

Ginger Jones meantime was almost as completely paralyzed as any of them. He stood looking at them for a moment and then set himself to work to right the table and to get what unbroken dishes there were upon it again.

"What on earth did you do that for?" asked Shorty's wife.

"Hang me if I know," replied Shorty, in a wild and most bewildered way.

The Kid was even more confused. Something had caused them both to jump almost out of their skins, but what that something was neither of them knew.

Indeed, so completely paralyzed were they that they scarcely knew themselves, while their wives began to think they had gone crazy.

They asked numerous questions with much anxiety, but could get no rational answers.

"Oh, that is some of their funny business," said the old man, indignantly, although he was struggling hard to repress a laugh.

"Well, I should think they ought to be ashamed of themselves," said the Kid's wife.

Shorty and the Kid looked at each other.

"Tumble?" asked Shorty.

"Nixy. Do you?"

"Not once."

"What was it?"

"Ask me something easier."

"What made you jump?"

"I surrender. What made you take that flyin' leap?" asked the Kid.

"Bust me if I know. Something made me tingle, an' bounced me."

"Me too. What was it?"

"Now, I object," put in the old man. "This nonsense is entirely out of place under the circumstances," and at the same time he had to pinch himself to keep from laughing.

"So we all think," said the wives, who, supposing that their husbands had simply did a little job for the sake of surprising them, were properly indignant.

By this time Ginger Jones had got things arranged again, and once more the bewildered family gathered cautiously around the table.

"Now let us have no more of this nonsense," the old man said, looking savage.

As for Shorty and the Kid they had nothing at all to say for themselves; they were completely taken aback.

"Look at the broken dishes and this ruined carpet," said Shorty's wife, reproachfully.

"I think they have both got the old-fashioned 'Jumping-Jack' on them," said the Kid's wife.

"Nixy, but I don't know what it was. Maybe it was nervousness," replied Shorty, thoughtfully.

"Perhaps a little less champagne would cure that nervousness," suggested Shorty's wife.

Various comments were made, but in a few moments the table was all right again and the supper resumed.

But the old man was not satisfied yet.

He touched the knob once more, and again Shorty and the Kid shot up into the air, upsetting the table as before, and falling sprawling amid the ruins.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE wildest excitement prevailed in that dining-room after the old man touched the knob the second time, for the effects had been even more marked than at first.

Shorty and the Kid had been bounced into the air about a yard, knocking over the table as before and scattering the dishes and things all over the floor, making a terrible wreck, in the midst of which they were sprawling in the most comical manner imaginable.

The three wives were screeching and Ginger Jones was flying around like a kernel of corn in a popper, trying to assist Shorty and the Kid to their feet, running from one to the other in his anxiety to rescue them.

The old man could not control his feelings any longer, and began to laugh with all his might and main.

The truth of the mystery was that he had arranged wires to the chairs both of Shorty and the Kid, and by touching the knob before spoken of, had given them a tremendous electrical shock, the effect of which had been to bounce them up as before described.

The thing had bewildered them terribly, but when they saw the old man laughing so heartily they half tumbled.

"Soy, what is it?" demanded the Kid.

"What are yer laughin' about?" asked Shorty, facing the old joker.

"Oh, nothing, only it was too comical for anything to see you bounce," he replied.

"This is a job, an' I'm bettin' on it."

"Cert, but what is it?" asked the Kid.

The old man's laughter interrupted them, and even the bewildered wives took a square look at him.

"Josiah, what does this mean?" asked the old man's wife, but he kept on laughing, refusing to give it away.

"Do you know anything about this most extraordinary piece of business?" demanded Shorty's wife, indignantly, while Ginger Jones was busy trying to right the table and gather up what there was left of the wreck.

But it was so good that the old man made up his mind not to give it away anyhow.

At the same time, however, Shorty and the Kid resolved to fathom the mystery.

"What was it that made you jump, George?" asked Shorty's wife, anxiously.

"I give it up, Kate, but I'm bettin' there's a racket here somewhere."

"An' I'm puttin' down my boode dat der ole man's a workin' it," added the Kid, still rubbing himself, for the shock had nearly broken them both all up.

"Cert," chimed Shorty, indignantly, while the old man kept up his laughing.

"Well, it certainly is a very curious piece of business," said the Kid's wife, angrily.

"Did you see 'em rise?" asked the old man, wiping

the tears of laughter from his eyes. "Did you see 'em go up?"

"Yes, and we saw them come down; and we saw the table and dishes come down. What is the meaning of it all, I'd like to know?"

"So would I," replied the old man. "It must be they have gone crazy."

"Oh, that's all right, dad. If it's a racket we own up like little men, an' you score a big one on your side," said Shorty.

"Oh, you think I made you jump, hey?"

"Something certainly made them act very queer," said the old man's wife, smiling.

"Well, the trouble is, they are imbibing too much. Say, why don't you fellows swear off?" asked the laughing old joker.

"Bah!" and repeating it, the entire party, with the exception of the old man and his wife, left the room not in the best of spirits.

"What was it, Josiah?" she asked.

"What was it? It was lightning," and again he went off into a fit of laughter.

"Lightning?"

"To be sure it was."

"I don't understand you."

"Want another experiment?"

"Well, yes, provided it doesn't fall on me, or I upon it," said she, looking around.

"I'll work it on Ginger and Ho Sham," said he, whispering to her. "Say, Ginger, sit down in Shorty's chair and tell Ho Sham to take that of the Kid," turning to the bewildered waiter.

Ho Sham had not seen the racket, and so he came in very fresh, taking the chair lately occupied by the Kid, and feeling exceedingly splendid at having such an honor conferred upon him, while Ginger Jones hesitated a little and looked a trifle wild.

"Be seated, boys, and have something to eat," said the old man, cheerfully.

"Boss, I don't feel hungry," protested Ginger.

"Me allie yidle; me takie slum meatie allie same likie bloss bloy wie glassie eye," said Ho, seizing his knife and fork.

The next instant the old man touched the knob, and both Ho Sham and Ginger Jones went bounding into the air as the others had done.

They whooped and yelled as they went up; they howled and cursed as they came down.

What had escaped wreckage during the first two experiments went to smash now without a doubt.

"Oh, Lord! oh, Lord! bress de Lord!" cried Ginger, crawling out from under the table.

"Cussie blazie, how be?" demanded Ho Sham, rising to his feet and looking anxiously around.

The old man and his wife were both of them laughing heartily.

Ginger stood rubbing the seat of his trousers, with a look of wonder on his face.

"What is the matter, Ho Sham?" asked the old man, pausing a bit in his laughter.

"Somebody stickie pinnie lin me likie blazie, makie me jumpie likie catie, so be."

"And what made you jump so, Ginger?"

"Golly, I d'no, boss, but somefin cotched me ahind like bout fifty hornets, all gettin' in ther fine work at de same time," he replied.

"Well, that's all right. Pick up the things and get all to rights again," said the old man.

"Where pinnie go?" asked Ho Sham, taking a careful look at the chair on which he had sat.

"Go long! What's ther matter wid yer?" asked Ginger, who could not bear to believe that there was anything he did not understand.

"Makie jumpie klick!"

"Oh, shut up, and help pick up things here, or I'll bust yer big nose off," replied the coon, as the old man and his wife went laughing from the room, fully convinced that he could work a practical joke on Shorty and the Kid, although he had failed in doing so several times.

He explained it to her carefully, and together they laughed over it for some time after they had retired to their chamber.

But Shorty was not the rooster to have a joke worked on him so successfully as that one had been without one going to the bottom of the matter, and finding out all about it.

He did not understand anything about the science of electricity, or how it had been employed to give him such a bounce, but no sooner had the old man got into his chamber than he went back to the dining-room, and began to investigate to see if he could find out the secret.

He worked over the thing for some time without finding anything suspicious, but finally, with the assistance of Ginger Jones, he discovered the wires coming up through the floor and attached to the chairs.

Following it up—or rather down—he found that these wires led into the cellar, where there was a powerful shocking-machine still in working order.

After studying over the matter for some time, and remembering what he had read and heard about such apparatuses, and how they worked, he finally found out the secret of the racket that the old man had played so successfully.

"That's all right," he muttered. "Ther old man's a good one. This beats me all ter pieces. I'm a duff, sure."

"By golly, boss, yer oughter seen him gib me an' Ho Sham de gran' list," said Ginger, grinning.

"What! Did he get in on you fellers?"

"Oh, by gosh, yer oughter seen us!" replied Ginger, bursting into a laugh.

"Good enough."

"It was too good 'nough for me, boss."

"Oh, that's all right. It must have cost him quite a boodle to get this thing set up, an' I don't blame him for workin' it for all it was worth."

"Gosh, guess he got his money's wuf out ob me," mused Ginger.

"Now let's see if we can't work him with the same snap," said Shorty, thoughtfully.

"Dat war a great job dat he play, boss."

"Right you are, Ginge. He's got good an' even with us for all we've played on him, but let's see if we can't catch on for a piece of the same racket," and he began to investigate more closely.

It took him some time to get the thing down fine, but he finally did so, and then he went to bed as happy as a big hard clam.

As for the old man, the success of his big practical joke had so delighted him that he forgot all about the apparatus which he put up at so much cost and labor, evidently believing that it had exploded like a fire-cracker when it expended its energy on his victims.

He laughed until he was sore, but the Kid was already too sore to laugh at all, not taking it so good-naturedly as Shorty did.

There was that about the little runt, he could play jokes on other people and have any number of laughs at the expense of others, but it made him sick to have anybody get the grand laugh on him as his grandfather-brother-in-law had done.

Shorty, however, felt all right, and after explaining the racket to his wife and telling her what he had done by way of playing it back on the old man, he fell asleep with a smile on his mug as big as a sunflower.

They met the next morning at breakfast. The old man wore a seven-by-nine grin, as did his wife, but the others looked ugly, showing, as he thought, that they were still in the dark.

"Well, boys, you don't seem to look so very happy this morning. What's the matter?" he asked, looking from Shorty to the Kid.

"Bah!" was the only reply he got.

"Probably you didn't enjoy your dance last night," said he, laughing.

The Kid made no reply because he was still in the dark, and Shorty made none because he wished to appear to be so.

"How did you do it anyway?" asked Shorty's wife.

"Me!" exclaimed the old man, still determined to keep up the racket, and appear innocent.

"Yes, how did you work it?"

"Well, if I knew I'd tell you," said he, and he secretly made up his mind to give them both another dose of "jumping-jack."

The breakfast was being served by Ginger Jones, and the old joker took the first opportunity he could get to look under the table so as to locate the knob, that he might reach it again without trouble.

"Well, that was the worst old case of jim-jams that ever I saw," he mused, as he began to sip his coffee and eat his breakfast, but neither Shorty nor the Kid made any reply.

Indeed, nobody seemed inclined to notice him as he went on chaffing them, and finally he made up his mind to give them another rise.

He touched the knob under the table with his foot, and the next instant he gave a yell and bounded upwards as though seven hundred wasps had stung him beneath the bosom of his pants.

And the table went over with him, as it had done in the other case, with Shorty and the Kid, tipping everything off, making a smash and a crash, while the women folks screamed murder and things and started back in alarm.

It was a success. The apparatus was still in good working order.

But a more astonished old joker than that man Burwick was never seen.

Shorty and the Kid yelled their laughter, as did their wives, and instantly the old fellow knew that the tables had been turned upon him, and that he had after all been paid off in his own coin.

He grinned a painful looking grin as he picked him self up and gazed around.

"What in thunder are you laughing at, you big hunk of charcoal?" he howled, as his eyes fell upon Ginger Jones.

"Nuffin', sah," and, in the face of the old man's frown, he tried to brace up and look serious.

"What were you jumping about and upsetting the table for?" asked Shorty.

"Oh, shut up!"

"Soy, pop, got der Saint Vitus dance?" asked the Kid, whereat they all laughed again.

"Oh, dry up!"

"You appear to have it just as hard as the boys had it last night," suggested Shorty's wife.

"Well, he played it on them first anyway," said Angelina, bound to take her husband's part, for she was proud of his artful achievement.

"But he should have managed it so as not to have had it played back on him. I think it very much resembles a boomerang," suggested the Kid's wife.

"Who's a boomerang?" demanded the old man, angrily.

"The joke acted like one, I think."

The old man turned away in disgust. He would have given a ten-dollar note if Ginger Jones had but laughed or made any remark whatsoever, so badly did he want to hit somebody.

But Ginger went to work to pick up the broken dishes and to wonder within himself how valuable this style of practical joking was to the crockery vendors.

"Well, however funny this business may be, I regard it as somewhat expensive," said Shorty's wife, who, it will be remembered, was nominally at the head of the establishment.

"Well, didn't they begin it?" asked the old man, looking savage enough to bite a spike.

"Really, I think you must take the credit of beginning this racket yourself."

"But shall I allow them to play tricks on me and play none on them in return?"

"Well, of course you can do as you think best about

that, but if I were you, and had no better success than you do with your jokes, I think I should give up the business," she replied, laughing.

"Pshaw! Didn't I bounce them last night?"

"Yes; but the bounce you gave yourself this morning is more than an offset."

"I—I don't think so."

"I do, though. To be sure, you bounced them last night, and attempted to do again just now, but instead of doing so you bounced yourself."

"Did a mule kick yer, pop?" asked the Kid.

"Oh, shut up!"

"I say, dad, if I was you I'd go inter the circus business," suggested Shorty, who was very much pleased with the way his snap had worked.

The old man made no reply, but he looked hard at Ginger Jones, as though actually yearning to have him say or do something, so mad was he, and so anxious to vent it upon some one.

In a few minutes they were all seated again around the breakfast-table, and Ginger was replacing the dishes, while Ho Sham was wiping up the floor.

"Somebody gotie jumpe jimmie, guess," he muttered to himself, as he worked away.

"Well, this finishes this Brussels carpet," remarked Shorty's wife, as she glanced at it.

"Oh, pop's good for another," said the Kid.

"Of course I am, and it's none of your business either," the old fellow growled.

"That's right," said Shorty.

"What's right?"

"Why, of course it's nobody's business but yer own, an' I'm glad ter hear yer take all ther blame on yer-self."

"Oh, bah! Eat your breakfast and shut up."

"Goin' ter teach that knob some more?" Shorty asked, after a moment's silence.

This question not only raised a laugh, but it nearly caused the old man to choke himself with the mouthful he had just taken.

"Me touchie," said Ho Sham, looking up cheerfully.

"Confound you!" roared the old man in anger, while the others roared with laughter, and seizing a dish of oatmeal mush, he threw it with sudden and snerring aim, striking the grinning Chinaman full in the face and plastering up both eyes, nose and mouth.

"Hoop, hal cussie, cussie!" exclaimed Ho, dancing wildly about and trying to paw the sticky stuff out of his eyes.

But before he could half do so the irate old man seized and ran him out of the room.

"Get out!" he roared, giving him a parting kick. "Don't you know any better than to drop that mush all over the carpet?"

"Oh, cussie olle man gotie jimmie jammie," they heard him mutter, just as Mr. Burwick closed the door upon him.

This only made matters all the worse, for now even his own wife laughed.

The old fellow could not stand that, and after jawing awhile and running Ginger around the room once or twice because he happened to laugh, he shot out of the door, got under his hat, which hung in the entry, and bounced out of doors in quest of fresh air.

This left the others to finish their breakfast and enjoy their laugh unmolested, although the chief fun-maker had departed.

After all was over, Shorty took them into the cellar and showed them the battery that had caused so much fun and mischief, and explained how the old thing worked.

But the ladies insisted upon it that it should be removed and placed where it could do no further harm, and as it had served its purpose, Shorty ordered Ho Sham to remove it to the back yard and stow it away.

Now all this had been a great mystery to the Chinaman, and it is scarcely to be wondered at that he thought those upon whom it had so potently worked had a touch of the jim-jams.

But he started to obey orders, lifting it carefully and going with it through the kitchen. The vibrator, or current-breaker, was still buzzing away, and naturally it attracted the cook's attention.

"Fut's that?" she asked, curiously.

"Jimmie jammie, spect."

"Hathin' gibberish is that?"

"Makee hop, hip, jumpee heap."

"An' is it alive?"

"So be."

"Faix, it's a burred; I hare it buzzin' loike a Jarsey muskettle," she mused, and as Ho Sham set it down upon the kitchen table she approached to take a nearer view of it.

As for Ho, he could not explain it to her, but he somehow wished that it would serve her as it had himself and others, so he encouraged her in her investigations.

The apparatus was held in a closed box, out of which ran a wire on either side, and it was the noise of the vibrating electrome or current-breaker that caused the shock that made her think that it was a bird or some insect thus confined.

"An' fut's these wires for?" she asked, after making all the inquiries she could think of regarding the mysterious affair.

Ho Sham had one of these wires in his hand while she was investigating, and she took up the other in an inquisitive manner.

Ho attempted to explain it in his pigeon English, and in doing so, took hold of her other hand, thus completing the circuit and giving them both a shock which nearly paralyzed them.

Such dancing and yelling as they both did! But the shock was so powerful that neither of them could let go of the wires or of each other's hands.

But they could dance and yell all the same, frightening the whole household and bringing them down to the kitchen in all haste.

There the two victims stood, dancing, shaking, and yelling as Shorty and the others entered.

CHAPTER XIX.

"MURDER—murder!" shouted Biddy, the cook.

"Oh, blazie heap!" yelled Ho Sham, as he and she danced under the force of the electric shock, which was a sort of a tail-end of the old man's joke.

"Take it off me!"

"Oh, hol hi, hi!"

Shorty and the Kid roared with laughter, for they saw what had happened the two inquisitive servants, but Shorty's wife was alarmed by their cries and contortions, and ran to their rescue.

Catching Ho Sham by the wrist, she pulled the wire through his hand so as to break the current, but by doing so she got into it herself, and then she began to dance and yell.

"Oh, George! oh, oh, stop it!" she cried, while Biddy and Ho Sham continued their whooping and dancing.

It was big fun for Shorty and the Kid, but it was rough on the victims.

There was the wildest excitement, and in the midst of it Angelina flew to her mother's assistance, and by some means or other she got into the electric current, and involuntarily joined in the dance, thus making matters still more sensational, exciting, and mixed.

"Go it!" shouted Shorty.

"Hi, ho, hippie la! Stopple!" cried Ho Sham.

"George! George!"

"Whoop er up!" yelled the Kid, for the fun was a big belly full for him.

"Will yeese lave me go, bad luck ter yer!" howled Biddy; and with one desperate effort she drew backward, pulling the apparatus over upon the floor and smashing it, thus breaking the current and setting them all free.

But by this time Biddy had got worked up to a fighting point, and the instant she was free she fell upon Ho Sham tooth, nail and fist, regarding him as the cause of all the trouble, if not actually the putter-up of the job upon her.

She knocked him down and then mounted him, giving him even more than Paddy gave the drum.

He whooped murder in broken English and wild Chinese.

"Bad luck ter yeese, take that!" cried Biddy, "an' that, an' that," and she would have murdered him had not the women folks dragged her from him by main force.

As for Shorty and the Kid, they would never have separated them; it was too high fun for them.

"Bad luck ter ther haythen blackguard, lave me at him!" she cried, struggling to get at the unfortunate Chinaman again.

"Be quiet, Bridget," said Shorty's wife, as she held her back.

"Lave me at him!"

"Ho cussie hil No, no!" cried Ho Sham, darting from the room.

"Ther fends go way wid yeese."

"Hush! Be quiet, I tell you."

"Heavens and earth! whoever heard of such a disgraceful affair?" asked the Kid's wife, angrily.

"What are you laughing at?" demanded Shorty's wife, confronting the uproarious jokers. "I should think you would be ashamed of yourselves, having such a disgraceful affair in the house."

"What have we got ter do with it?" asked Shorty, as soon as he could speak.

"Why, did you not start it?"

"Start nothin'. I told Ho Sham ter take ther ole machine an' fire it in ther back yard."

"An' bad luck ter ther spalpeen, didn't he lave it there on ther table?" demanded the exasperated Biddy.

"Well, but how came you to get caught?" asked Angie, smiling.

"Faix, I didn't know fut it wur at all, at jall, an' he went for ter show me; so he did, bad luck ter his ould pig tail."

"And he showed yer how the old thing worked, didn't he?" asked the Kid.

"He sazed me by the hand, so he did, ther baste, an' then ther ould machine began ter buzz."

"An' you began ter dance?"

"An' a dance it was, bad manners ter him."

"Well, I should say so," said Shorty's wife.

"I should smile," laughed Shorty.

"An' I should snicker," added the Kid.

"Oh, but I'll fix him yet."

"And yet it does not appear that he was any more to blame than you were," suggested the Kid's wife, in the interest of peace.

"Bad luck ter ther hathin spalpeen, fut business has he here onyhaw?"

"He is your fellow-servant and you have no right to abuse him."

"No, and punish him as you just did."

"Och, but I've not done wid him yet."

"Yes, you have, for I insist upon it that you let him alone in future."

"All right; then I'll give me notice av lavin'," replied Bridget, hotly.

"Very well; we can get along without you."

"I'll not stay where they employ hathins and nagers, so I'll not."

"Very well, I can fill your place," said Shorty's wife, resolutely.

Shorty gave Biddy the wink, and she turned away to her business, muttering something that could not be understood, while he and the Kid picked up the ruined battery, and tumbled it out into the back yard.

The woman went up-stairs; the Kid went to find Ho Sham, while Shorty made it all right with Biddy, who therefore withdrew her resolution of leaving.

As for poor Ho, the Kid found him up-stairs in the bath-room, bathing his bleeding snout with cold water, trying to stop the flow of the ruby.

"What's der matter, Ho?" asked the Kid.

"Blastie cussie nosie loff," he muttered, without looking up.

"But what did you do to her?"

"Me no. Me show shine, how make jumple. Me catchie hold wires then dance allie time likie monkey."

"But she thinks yer put up a job on her."

"Me no; me no jobbie. Allie hap likie don't know how be."

"Oh, whater yer givin' us, ole man? Yer put up a snap on the ole gal, sure 'nough."

"Me hopie die. Me allie sklare. Me no bad Chinaman. Biddy knockie stuffin lout allie time. Me sickie. Me no stay. Me no piggie, me know when gottie nough," said he, as he sadly wiped his face.

"Bah! Yer no good."

"No; me play lout."

"Why don't yer brace up an' show some style 'bout yerself?"

"Me no; me leaken," said he, sadly.

"Weaken! Weaken on a woman?"

"Me gottie belly full. Me no piggie."

"Oh, bah! Yes, N. G.!"

"So be. Me leaken," said he, sadly.

"All right. Let her pound yer."

"Me no. Me skipple lout."

"Nixy, cully, no skip."

"No skipple?"

"Not once. Yer here for life."

"Whoop! me go."

"Not much. If yer do, we'll send yer ter prison for life."

"Me clant stan'."

"But you must," persisted the Kid. "Yer here for yer natural life," and then he left him, trying to get his mug into shape.

The poor fellow was frightened nearly out of his life at this prospect, for he knew that Biddy would undoubtedly kill him if he remained, and this prospect, offset against the one of going to prison for life, as the Kid had said, made him inclined to git and take the latter chance.

Now, Ginger Jones had escaped all this, although he did not fail to note the uncommon row that had been going on in the kitchen.

What it was all about he did not know, but seeing that Biddy was on her ear about something, he concluded that he didn't want any of it, and so he kept out of her way just the best he knew how.

It will be remembered that the old man had gone out for a walk, to get the cool air, after the laugh had been turned upon him so splendidly, and so he knew nothing of the impromptu racket that had been going on.

As for the wives, they were exceedingly indignant at it all. They could see little or no fun in a snap that created a fight between the household servants, and so they got their heads together to see if they could not contrive some way to put a stop to this sort of a thing.

"There is no use in trying to cure them of these practical jokes," said the Kid's wife, "for they are a part of their lives."

"I should say so," said Angie.

"But I don't like it."

"I'll tell you what. We can cure them," said Angie, after a moment's reflection.

"How?"

"Tell us for goodness sake!"

"Give them some of their own doses."

"But how, I'd like to know?"

"I have an idea."

"More practical jokes?" asked Shorty's wife, holding up her hands in disgust.

"It's the only way. Now, I'll tell you what we'll do."

"Well."

"The babies."

"What of the little darlings?"

"We'll dress 'em up!"

"How?"

"Oh, I have the idea. I tell you we have got to take a hand in this business ourselves in order to break them of it."

"Pshaw! that will only make matters all the worse."

"Perhaps not, mother. At all events we can try it and see how it works."

"Well, what do you propose?"

"We'll take the babies and black them up like little negro babies."

"Yes, that will be splendid."

"How?"

"I will tell you. We'll blacken their faces and dress them up like little negro minstrels, put them in their little high-chairs, and then let them see how they look."

Shorty's wife smiled faintly, but she hardly saw how such a circus was going to cure the jokers of their pranks.

But the other two thought they were sure of having some fun out of the thing, if they effected no reformation, and so they set about making preparations to carry out the idea.

Meantime quiet once more settled over the Shorty household, with the exception of the laughs which the servants naturally bestowed upon poor Ho Sham, who, in order to get square with something or somebody, took the first opportunity he could to go out into the back yard and kick the stuffing out of that infernal "jumple machine," as he called the battery which had so shaken up the family, and being pointed with wooden shoes he made short work of it.

The old man returned after being absent a few hours, feeling a trifle better than when they had laughed him out of the house.

But he was in no angel humor even then, and didn't mean to be fooled with much. Shorty met him as he came in. "Hello, dad," said he, cheerily. "Well, what of it?" returned the old man, looking coldly at him. "Got over yer mad?" "None of your business." "Oh, take a fall! I never seen yer so cranky afore in my life." "Well, I never suffered such indignity before." "Nonsense. Forgot about that wandering minstrel racket in London, haven't yer?" "The old fellow did remember it; but, as he turned savagely upon the little joker and saw the huge grin upon his comical mug, he began to grin himself, and finally they both burst into a loud laugh. "Well, but I won't have any more of it," said the old fellow, after laughing awhile. "That was all very well when we were single fellows; but now that we are married, we ought to settle down and behave somewhat more like men. Let it stop." "All right. But I want ter tell yer of ther racket we had here after yer skipped out with yer back up." And Shorty thereupon proceeded to narrate the adventures of Ho Shum and Biddy with the battery down in the kitchen. Mad as the old man was, this story, told in Shorty's inimitable manner, made him roar as loudly as he ever did in his life. In fact, he appeared to forget all about the reformation he had just been talking about, and so in a few minutes his good humor was fully restored. Everything passed off pleasantly during the day. Indeed, it was fully a week before any other breeze disturbed the harmony of the household, and it happened up in the nursery. One morning Shorty, the old man, and the Kid went up together to see the youngsters, as they generally did nearly every day. But on entering the room what a sight met their gaze! Tied into three high-chairs were the three babies, each one blackened up and dressed like a miniature negro minstrel! One of them was squalling like a young hurricane, another was gazing with wide open eyes, while the third was laughing and crowing delightedly. They started back in astonishment as they entered the room. There was nobody there but the disguised babies. "Holy Moses!" exclaimed Shorty. "Great Nebuchadnezzar!" cried the old man. "Snakes and tadpoles!" squeaked the Kid. "What is this?" "What are they?" "Whose are they?" "Where did they come from?" "Look at that little coon laugh!" "Hear that one yell!" "Well, that beats the bush," sighed the old man. "Where is everybody, I'd like to know?" "I say, what is it, anyway?" asked the Kid. "A racket." "But whose? What babies are these? Where are

our own, I'd like to know? Hello! Angie, Kate, Caddy, nurse girls—anybody, where are you?" the old man whooped. But nobody replied, and there they stood gazing at the three comical little coons, utterly at a loss what to make of them. "Well, say, they're blacked up with burnt cork," said Shorty, after taking a closer look at them. "What's that yer soy?" asked the Kid. "And are they our babies?" "Cert." "Is it possible? Who has done this?" "Ther nurse girls I guess." "Where are they? I'll murder and then discharge them," protested the old man. "Oh! they only did it for a joke," said Shorty. "Joke! Confound such jokes; I'll not have any such joking with my child, and I'll just let them know it. This is what comes of our practical joking. Even our servants take it up." Both Shorty and the Kid laughed. "That's right, laugh—laugh and encourage them in the business, confound you. Haven't you fellows got any dignity about you?" "Well, what's ther use of kickin'?" "I'll show you what use there is in it. This joking has got to stop, but before we can prevent it in the servants, we must stop it ourselves. Oh, I'll fix those girls for this," he added, going from the room in high dudgeon. Shorty and the Kid remained behind to laugh at the little comics, all of whom by this time were laughing and crowing in high glee, and it was a funny sight indeed. But presently the three wives came in by another door and joined in the laugh just as the old man returned with Ginger Jones and Ho Sham. He started in astonishment as he entered, while Ginger flung himself into a laugh that could have been heard fifty rods away. "Ho, ho, hit lillie monkie allie samie likie Gingle!" cried Ho Sham, pointing to them. "What is the meaning of this?" demanded the old man, gazing from one of the wives to the other, but a chorus of laughter was his only answer. "Who blackened those babies?" he redemanded. "Well, pop, it must have been some of the practical jokers in the house," replied Shorty's wife, trying hard to look serious. "Where are the nurse-girls—did they do it?" "You mustn't ask us," said Angie. "And how are we to pick out our babies?" asked the Kid's wife. "That's so. Go for yer scales, pop." "Confound the scales! Confound everything! Where is the girl? Here, come at once and wash these babies," he called, angrily. "Oh, you all go down-stairs. We will see that the babies are washed," said Shorty's wife, pushing him from the room. Reluctantly, and with the old man still growling like a bear with a sore head, they made their way down to the sitting-room. To tell the truth, neither Shorty nor the Kid felt so

happy as they were before they found out that their wives had worked the practical joke on them, for they had never thought that *they* might take a hand in such business, and they didn't like it much. "Now, then, what do you think?" asked the old man, after they were alone together. "Ther gals gettin' on it, eh?" mused Shorty. "To be sure they are. I thought at first that the servants had followed our example. But the thing must stop right here," said he, savagely. "How?" "Well, I'll tell you. If the girls have taken up the joking business, it is time that we took a tumble and shut down on it." "That's so," said Shorty, thoughtfully. "Hain't we better swim out?" asked the Kid. "I think so. Now let us shake hands and give our words that we'll do no more of this funny business, and actually settle down." "There's my flip," said Shorty, offering his hand. "Squeeze my little paddy on it, pop," added the Kid, following Shorty's example. "Now, do you really mean it, boys?" "Honest Injun!" replied Shorty. "Now-I-lay-me!" squeaked the Kid, seriously. "Well, then, let us shake hands solemnly, and promise to turn over a new leaf. If we have any more fun of that kind let it be out of the house, eh?" "Yes, yes; I agree to it." "We are married, and now that we are fathers, in Heaven's name isn't it time that we settled down?" "I squat," said the Kid. "I'll be a deacon from this time forth." "Good! So we all will be." "There were three deacons on a tree"—the Kid longed to sing, when the three wives and mothers came into the room, each with her baby in her arms, and smiling. "We've sworn off, Kate," said Shorty. "Sworn off what?" "Rackets. From this out we're goin' ter be just little deacons." "Is that so?" asked the other two wives. "Yes—no more snaps. We are married—" "Well, I should say so," said Caddy. "An' we're goin' ter settle down." "We are glad to hear it." "Yes, from this time forward we are all going to be model husbands and play no more practical jokes on each other," said the old man, earnestly. "Give us your hands on it!" said the wives. "Grip!" "Shake!" and they all shook hands. "Now we shall see how long you will keep your promise unfractured," said Shorty's wife. "Oh, we're on it!" "We are!" "We are!" And as they all evidently meant business (although it is hard to believe that they could possibly keep the agreement long), let us once more bid the Shortys good-bye, having seen them in all their phases of *Married and Settled Down*.

[THE END.]

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